CHARLES DICKENS

BELLE MOSES

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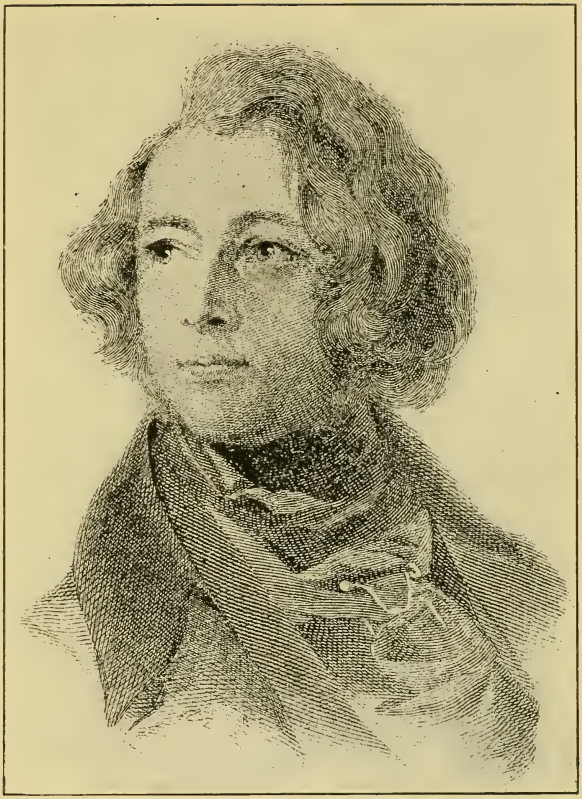
AND HIS GIRL HEROINES



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AND HIS GIRL HEROINES

BY

BELLE MOSES

AUTHOR OF
"LOUISA MAY ALCOTT" AND "LEWIS CARROLL"

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TO

MY FOUR GIRL FRIENDS

KATHARINE, EVELYN, HARRIET AND LAVINIA

THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

PREFACE.

Those who know and love their Dickens, know also that though he was a man of high character, and deep and sincere purpose, he had all the peculiarities of a great genius. On whatever side one viewed him, one saw a different picture. His moods were as changeful as the shifting of a kaleidoscope, yet always interesting, always true to some simple law within himself, forming — from the bright, restless particles floating in the space of his brilliant mind — something symmetrical and beautiful for the world to look at. He has painted pictures which can never fade; he has created men and women, boys and girls, as living and real as those we know to-day, and though he died nearly half a century ago, we cannot help feeling that only his quick, moving presence has vanished. The soul of the man flashes through his books, which will hold and enthrall future generations as they have held the generations of the past.

Nowhere does his art shine forth more tenderly, more beautifully, and more truly than in the creation of his girl heroines. Here he showed the skill of the sculptor in the simple grace with which he

endowed even the humblest of his girls. And it is chiefly in connection with this side of his many-sided character and genius, that we will view the man, hoping to present him to our readers — if not in a new light — at least with the glow of the deep and kindly interest, and the gentle courtesy which always marked his intercourse with girls, in his books — and out of them.

In the preparation of this book, I have been aided through many sources, but my chief thanks are due to the libraries — the Traveling Library, the St. Agnes branch of the Public Library, and Columbia University Library, for their very efficient help in my work.

BELLE MOSES.

CONTENTS.

PART I.

THE BOY.

CHAPTER PAGE

I.—In the Very Beginning 1

II.—The Real David Copperfield 19

III.—The Little Dickenses at Home 41

IV.—The First Start in Life 58

PART II.

THE YOUNG MAN.

V.—The First Sparks of Genius 83

VI.—The First Novels and What Came of Them . 102

VII.—Master Humphrey's First Tale 125

VIII.—Dickens and the Historical Novel 147

PART III.

THE BOOKS THAT MADE THE MAN.

IX.—Dickens and America 171

X.—The Spirit of Christmas 192

XI.—The Girls of Dickens's Day 219

XII.—Little Housekeepers in Dickens-Land . . . 247

PART IV.

THE MAN WHO MADE THE BOOKS.

CHAPTER PAGE

XIII.—Dickens, the Many-Sided 275

XIV.—Dickens and His Friends 299

XV.—Dickens at Home 314

PART I.

THE BOY.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE VERY BEGINNING.

WE all begin pretty much the same way; little red, crumpled bundles of humanity, tightly tucked up in bassinets which we soon outgrow. Some of us kick more than others; some of us crow more than others; some of us cry more than others; but we all hit out aimlessly with our tiny fists, and challenge the world.

In America all men are born equal, but in England this is not so. The majority of English babies come into the world quite humbly (only the favored few look down from the heights), and this was the case with little Charles John Huffam Dickens, who sprang from the great Middle Class, which has produced more great men and women than all the peers and princes of the realm could boast of. We have his own words describing the day and hour of his birth:

"I was born (as I have been informed and believe) on a Friday at twelve o'clock at night." So says little *David Copperfield,* and everyone knows that Charles Dickens and *David Copperfield* were

doubles. Dickens's initials were C. D. (he dropped John Huffam as soon as he had a voice in the matter), and *David's* were D. C., easy enough to turn round when there is a real boy hiding behind the boy in the book. And it is quite true that Charles Dickens was born at Portsea, on Friday, February 7, 1812 — "Leap Year," one of his biographers tells us, "at a few minutes before midnight."

The house in which he was born was like many other houses in Portsea; indeed, it was one of a row and not in any way distinguished from its fellows. Each house had a gabled roof and a dormer window; each had its little garden in the front, separated from its neighbor by a thickly growing hedge. Now, however, having once contained the cradle of Charles Dickens, Number 387, Mile-End Terrace, Portsea, has become quite a famous little residence, one of the landmarks of this shipping center. John Dickens, the father of Charles, was in the employ of the Navy Pay Office, and upon his marriage to Elizabeth Barrow, 1809, was transferred from Somerset House to attend to the paying off of ships at Portsmouth, so the young couple resided at Portsea, near by. Here three of their children were born; Frances Elizabeth — better known as Fanny Dickens — in November, 1810; Charles John Huffam Dickens, in February, 1812, and a third child, Alfred, who died when he was a baby.

The overshadowing name of our small hero was a compliment to his mother's father — Charles, to his own father — John, and to his godfather — Christopher Huffam, also connected with the Navy; but the simpler name, which the world knows, is the only one by which he was ever called, and gradually the others faded from the minds of all who knew the "small queer boy."

There were in all eight children in the Dickens family; the three above mentioned who were born in Portsea; then followed Letitia, born in 1816; another daughter, Harriet, who also died when she was a baby; Frederick, born in 1820; Alfred Lamert, born in 1822; and Augustus, in 1827.

The six surviving children were quite enough for one poor man to take care of, and John Dickens lived to prove that he was a poor hand at taking care of anybody. He lent money as freely as he borrowed, and so this good-natured, improvident man was always in hot water, from one cause or the other, and loose pennies did not lie around promiscuously in the Dickens household. Quite early in life the little Dickens children learned to regard pennies with awe and respect.

Charles Dickens's memory dipped 'way back into his childhood, so far back, indeed, that it seems hard to believe that the baby mind could hold, even for a moment, the impressions he recalls. Yet he tells us that they are not merely the things he had heard, but what he had seen with his baby eyes,

and thought out in that wondering baby brain of his, which began its active work at a time when most babies suck their thumbs and stare into vacancy.

His first impression of himself is very vivid; a laughing, golden-haired baby boy, taking his first steps from his mother to his nurse.

"I believe I can remember those two at a little distance apart, dwarfed to my sight by stooping down or kneeling on the floor, and I — going unsteadily from one to the other." [This was little *David Copperfield's* experience.] And he adds:

"This may be fancy, though I think the memory of most of us can go farther back into such times than many of us suppose." He has a further memory of a pigeon-house on a pole in the center of their back yard, without any pigeons in it, and of a dog-kennel in the corner — without any dog.

He remembered also a long passage — terribly long it seemed to his childish eyes — leading from the kitchen to the front door, with a dreadful dark closet on one side, where provisions were stored for family use. There were tubs and jars and tea-chests in this room, behind which any unknown terrors might hide and jump out on one, so the small boy with the big imagination ran past it at night, fear lending wings to his feet.

This was not the little house at Portsea which Dickens has described so vividly as the first resi-

dence of *David Copperfield;* they moved to another before little Charles was out of his nurse's arms, still in Portsea, though slightly over the boundary-line; and in 1816, when the boy was four years old, John Dickens moved his family to Chatham. In their new home, Number 2, Ordnance Terrace, where they lived for five years, were passed the only happy hours of childhood the "small queer boy" was ever to know.

There were only three children in the Dickens family when they moved to Chatham: Fanny, Charles, and little Letitia Mary — a very pretty, dainty little girl. Ordnance Terrace was a row of houses very much on the order of the row of houses in Mile-End Terrace, Portsea, but a little roomier, and even more highly respectable from the front. There were lots of interesting folk in Ordnance Terrace, interesting, that is, from the small boy's point of view, for this observing youngster of four tucked away beneath his curly pate impressions enough to pervade his books in after years.

On the corner resided his first sweetheart, little Lucy Stroughill, a golden-haired Lucy, whose birthday he was on several occasions invited to celebrate. Here is his own description:

"I can very well remember being taken out to visit some peach-faced creature in a blue sash, and shoes to correspond, whose life I supposed to consist entirely of birthdays. Upon seed-cake, sweet

wine, and shining presents, that glorified young person seemed to me to be exclusively reared. At so early a stage of my travels did I assist at the anniversary of her nativity (and became enamored of her) [he means that he went to her birthday party and fell in love with her] that I had not yet acquired the recondite knowledge that a birthday is the common property of all who are born, but supposed it to be a special gift bestowed by the favoring heavens on that one distinguished infant. There was no other company, and we sat in a shady bower, under a table, as my better (or worse) knowledge leads me to believe, and were regaled with saccharine [sugary] substances and liquids, until it was time to part."

This is a child's unfailing idea of a party; just something to eat, and a nice snug place to eat it in, and the fewer people there — why, the more one can eat, of course; but in addition to this, we must not forget that Master Charles was deeply in love with the golden curls and the blue sash with the shoes to match, and so the feast was a "love-feast" flavored with "seed-cake and sweet wine."

The brother of his divinity, George Stroughill, a bright, handsome, manly and somewhat daring boy, was a few years older than the small Charles, who admired him immensely, with very much the same love that *David Copperfield* had for *James Steerforth.* Indeed, it is pretty certain that Dickens had this early friend in mind when he

created the character of the handsome, reckless schoolboy.

We take for granted, of course, that to most of our readers, *David Copperfield* is a familiar friend; for the life of little Charles Dickens is so interwoven with the life of little *David Copperfield* that it is hard to tell of the childhood of one without referring in some slight way to the childhood of the other. Upon the whole, however, Charles Dickens had the easier lot. It is true he was a sensitive, delicate child, the victim of neglect, but his parents were never cruel to him. Indeed, while they lived at Ordnance Terrace, he had nothing but happiness in his sunny little life. His father was a favorite with his employers in the Chatham Dockyard, who described him as "a fellow of infinite humor, chatty, lively and agreeable." He was brimful of anecdote, and doubtless, in describing the men with whom he was thrown, unconsciously gave Charles material for the wonderful characters which were to delight future generations.

The mind of this "small queer boy" was like a sensitive film, and the impressions thrown upon it were thrown out again with added brilliance; nothing was ever forgotten, and Ordnance Terrace furnished many characters and localities. In some of the early "Sketches by Boz," that of the *Old Lady* described a Mrs. Newnham, who lived at Number 5, on the Terrace, and *The Half Pay*

Captain was also a very near neighbor. John Dickens at that time could afford to keep a servant, whose name, strange to say, was Mary Weller; not so strange, either, when one comes to think of it, for the boy loved the strong, capable woman, who stood by them through thick and thin, and it was quite natural that one of his most lovable characters, *Sam Weller,* should have borne the same surname. Names meant a great deal to the boy, and any name which was especially dear to him through association, we find many times reproduced in his books. The name of Lucy, his first love, occurs in five of his books, the one best remembered being the charming, golden-haired *Lucie Manette,* the heroine of "A Tale of Two Cities."

Mary Weller was most probably the nurse to whom Baby Charlie took his first steps, and many more of the Dickens children were nursed by her. She married a shipwright named Thomas Gibson, and lived in the neighborhood of Chatham, long after the family had moved away.

Her recollections of the small boy and his golden-haired sweetheart are very vivid. As Dickens himself says: "When will there come in after life, a passion so earnest, generous and true as theirs? What, even in its gentlest realities, can have the grace and charm that hover round such fairy lovers?"

Perhaps the golden-haired Lucy was in his mind

when describing *Little Em'ly,* the small *David's* first love. Let us see what feelings *David* had at the advanced age of seven or thereabout:

"Of course I was in love with little Em'ly. I am sure I loved that baby quite as truly, quite as tenderly, and with greater purity . . . than can enter into the best love of a later time of life . . . I am sure my fancy raised up something round that blue-eyed mite of a child which ethe-realized and made a very angel of her. If, any sunny forenoon, she had spread a little pair of wings and flown away before my eyes, I don't think I should have regarded it as much more than I had had reason to expect.

"We used to walk about that dim old flat at Yarmouth, in a loving manner, hours and hours. The days sported by us, as if Time had not grown up himself yet, but were a child, too, and always at play. I told Em'ly I adored her, and that unless she confessed she adored me, I should be reduced to the necessity of killing myself with a sword. She said she did, and I have no doubt she did."

Now, this thrilling romance was certainly a reminiscence of those days spent near the angel with the "blue sash and shoes to match," and eyes bluer than either. The walks they took together were round Chatham, and sometimes they went to the Navy Yard to watch the ship-building and the rope-making, and many a time they saw the new

ships floated out upon the Medway, which carried them to sea. Sometimes John Dickens took the children and their friends for a sail on the Medway, on the Navy Pay Yacht, *Chatham,* when he went on the business of the Pay Office. These expeditions were greatly enjoyed, although there were the strictest rules as to behavior while on board ship.

The Dickens household, when they lived at No. 2, Ordnance Terrace, consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Dickens, Fanny, Charles, and Letitia, and Mrs. Allen, a widowed aunt, a sister to Mrs. Dickens who always lived with them, and they are described as "a most genial, lovable family."

Mary Weller had charge of the kitchen as well as of the children, and she tells us: "Sometimes Charles would come downstairs and say to me: 'Now, Mary, clear the kitchen, we are going to have such a game!' And then George Stroughill would come in with his Magic Lantern, and they would sing, recite, and perform parts of plays. Fanny and Charles often sang together at this time, Fanny accompanying on the pianoforte."

At eight years of age, Charles Dickens was a great reader. Mary Weller says:

"Little Charles was a terrible boy to read, and his custom was to sit with his book in his left hand, holding his wrist with his right hand, and constantly moving it up and down, and at the same time sucking his tongue"—and she adds that he

was "a lively boy, of a good, genial, open disposition, and not quarrelsome, as most children are at times."

The River Medway separates Chatham from Rochester, the city of cities to the eyes of the small boy, for it had a *theater,* where they gave plays and pantomimes — the Theatre Royal it was called — and many a good thing Dickens saw there in the palmy days at Ordnance Terrace, before John Dickens became too poor to give his children pleasure. Here he saw the famous clown, Grimaldi, whose life he afterwards edited, and many great and noble dramas; and many great actors and actresses stirred ambition in this extremely youthful mind.

His first serious bit of writing was a tragedy called "Misnar, the Sultan of India," conceived and written at the age of nine, and he developed a taste for acting which stayed with him during the rest of his life. As a boy, he did character sketches which delighted his companions, and as a man, his acting quite equaled the work of many a professional. It was in this fashion that Dickens loved to entertain his friends, and his memory could go back to those earlier days when he and his sister Fanny mounted a dining table for a stage, at the old Mitre Inn, where their friends, the Tribes, lived, and sang all sorts of duets, sea ballads being the most popular.

This old Mitre Inn was, and still is, one of the

landmarks of Chatham. It was also a posting-house, that is, a sort of way-station for stage coaches, and Mr. Tribe was the landlord and owner. The fine old place still remains in his family, standing in the midst of beautiful grounds, and quite unaltered in any way.

The Dickens family and the Tribes were very intimate, and many a pleasant evening was passed either at the Inn or at Ordnance Terrace. Mr. Robert Langton, who has given us a most delightful account of the childhood of our hero, tells us of an interesting relic in the possession of the Tribe family. "It is a card of invitation written by Charles when between eight and nine years of age:

> 'Master and Miss Dickens will
> be pleased to have the company of
> Master and Miss Tribe to spend
> the Evening on . . . (date, &c.).'"

This is the earliest piece of writing of Charles Dickens known to be in existence.

Such a good time as these children did have! There were birthday parties, Twelfth Night parties, and parties just for no occasion at all; and there were never-to-be-forgotten picnics in the hay-field opposite the Terrace, a beautiful open stretch of country, now swallowed up by the Chatham Railway Station. And Charles and his pretty sister were often called upon to sing for the amusement of the company.

There is no mention of Charles at school in those early years. As a little boy he was quite delicate, and that is probably the reason why his mother was his first teacher. Certain it is that he learned to read at a very early age, and the time that other small boys devoted to romping and racing, was spent by him in devouring some old forgotten books of his father's. He tells us in "David Copperfield":

"My father had left a small collection of books in a little room upstairs, to which I had access (for it adjoined my own), and which nobody else in our house ever troubled. From that blessed little room *Roderick Random, Peregrine Pickle, Humphrey Clinker, Tom Jones,* the *Vicar of Wakefield, Don Quixote, Gil Blas,* and *Robinson Crusoe* came out, a glorious host to keep one company."

These queerly assorted companions did him no harm, but helped to feed the boy's fancy, and the "Arabian Nights" and the "Tales of the Genii" lent added fire to his vivid imagination. Soon quite naturally he himself took to writing, the tragedy of "Misnar" being his first production.

About this time a new influence came into his life. His aunt, Mrs. Allen, married Dr. Lamert, an army surgeon, and his son James became quite intimate with the Dickens family. He had a taste for theatricals, and soon discovered Charles's talent in that direction. James Lamert's father had roomy quarters at the hospital, which gave his son

plenty of space to plan entertainments and little Charles was always there to help. Indeed, it was James Lamert himself who first introduced the child to the delights of the Theatre Royal at Rochester.

Meanwhile, life at Ordnance Terrace was becoming just a *little* too difficult. John Dickens, the easy, good-natured spendthrift, was beginning to feel the pinches of poverty. He had lived beyond his means, and in 1821 he found it necessary to move into a much smaller house. There had been a new little brother and sister born at No. 2, Ordnance Terrace, but both had died, so in the House on the Brook, as it was called because of a brook which once flowed by it, Charles and his two little sisters began their altered lives. Mary Weller shook her head over the sad change: "There were," she said, "no such juvenile entertainments at this house as I had seen at the Terrace."

It was a small, cramped house, and the children could not help feeling the depressing change. But even so, there were compensations; the house was nearer the Dockyard, and the small boy, left to roam at will, spent much time at this interesting place. As he grew older he grew somewhat stronger, and the beautiful Kentish country had the greatest fascination for him. It was during his tramps about here that he first began to build his castles in the air. The alluring hillsides, the

green valleys, the flash and glimmer of the distant Medway as it ran out to sea, the long mysterious stretch of level far away, beyond which lay the ocean, and beyond that — the world, all cast their influence upon this sensitive, imaginative little boy.

This was Shakespeare's country (what part of England is not?) — and fat old Falstaff's haunts, and Gad's Hill, where in the early mornings he and his brother vagabonds waylaid and robbed the Canterbury pilgrims of their rich offerings, and stole the fat purses of the rich traders on their way to London, had a special attraction for this special small boy, who vowed in his ambitious little soul that he would some day be master of the brick house built upon its heights.

Gad's Hill was originally known as "God's Hill," but possibly the uncouth tongue of the common folk twisted the sound of it, or, even more probably, the many deeds of highway robbery were scarcely in keeping with the name; at any rate it began to be called Gad's Hill, and when little Charles had scaled its "gentle eminence" he looked down upon

> Cobham Woods to the right — on the opposite shore
> Laindon Hills in the distance — ten miles off or more;
> Then you've Milton and Gravesend behind — and before
> You can see almost all the way down to the Nore;
> . . . so charming a spot — it's rarely one's lot
> To see, and when seen it's as rarely forgot.

And Dickens never did forget it. Although the time was soon to come when he would leave this peaceful rural beauty for the smoke and grime of dingy London, the memory of it lingered always with him and haunted every book he wrote. He writes of it in "The Uncommercial Traveller" many years after.

"I have my eye on a piece of Kentish road bordered on either side by a wood, and having on one hand, between the road-dust and the trees, a skirting patch of grass. Wild flowers grow in abundance on this spot, and it lies high and airy, with a distant river stealing away to the ocean — like a man's life. To gain the milestone here, which the moss, primroses, violets, blue-bells and wild roses would soon render illegible, but for peering travellers pushing them aside with their sticks, you must come to a steep hill, come which way you may."

The Falstaff Inn — named after the jolly vagabond — he also describes, as "a little hostelry which no man possessed of a penny was ever known to pass in warm weather. Before its entrance are certain pleasant trimmed limes; likewise a cool well, with so musical a bucket-handle, that its fall upon the bucket rim will make a horse prick up his ears and neigh upon the droughty road half a mile off."

Gad's Hill was a "Robbing Road," and that was probably the reason why little Charles Dickens took

such a keen delight in rambling there. Doubtless Shakespeare's immortal footpads lurked in the woods which bordered the roadway; he would not have been surprised to see them rush out upon him and demand his money or his life. Poor little Charles! *He* would only have had to turn his pockets inside-out, and they would have passed him by. Indeed, the contents of all the pockets of the entire Dickens family at that time, would not have given a single stalwart robber a good square meal.

From an upper window in the side of the little House on the Brook, the children could look out upon the parish church and the churchyard, and at night Charles and Fanny, always chums and comrades, loved to gaze upward to the broad expanse of sky, and count the stars and single out their favorites. In "A Child's Dream of a Star," written years afterward when his favorite sister was dead, Dickens tells us about it in his own beautiful way:

"There was one clear, shining star that used to come out in the sky before the rest, near the church spire above the graves. It was larger and more beautiful, they thought, than all the others, and every night they watched for it, standing, hand in hand, at a window. Whoever saw it first cried out, 'I see the star!' and often they cried out together, knowing so well when it would rise and where. So they grew to be such friends with it,

that before lying down in their beds, they always looked out once again to bid it good night; and when they were turning round to sleep, they used to say —'God bless the star!'"

All the hopeless poverty in their bare little room was hidden by the kindly darkness. The children had their window and their star, and a certain golden streak of poetry in their baby hearts, which, all unconsciously, helped them always to look above and beyond.

Especially was this the case with the small boy, whose trials were about to begin. Somewhere in the darkened, dreary, and despairing little soul of him, there was a window through which he could see shimmering in the distance a far-off star. Sometimes it shone clear and bright; sometimes it glistened through his tears; but it was there — always splendid and always visible. There was never a day that he did not think of it; nor a night that he could not see it if he closed his eyes, and many a time before he slept, he stretched out his tired arms and whispered in the silence: "God bless the star!"

CHAPTER II.

THE REAL DAVID COPPERFIELD.

HARLES DICKENS was about nine years old when he had his first brief taste of school life. His mother, with her hands full of household cares and duties, had little time for anything else, and the teaching, upon which the boy had grown to depend, had to give place to the more urgent needs of the family. In some vague way, the persistent, eager young mind resented this; it was beginning to stir uneasily, to have longings toward wider wisdom than could be found among the old books.

It was about this time that Mr. William Giles, son of Rev. William Giles, the minister of Providence Chapel on the Brook, opened a small select school, consisting of his own younger brothers and sisters, the children of some of the garrison officers, and several of the neighbors' children, including Charles and his sister Fanny. Mr. Giles was an Oxford man, well-educated and a conscientious teacher, and from the beginning, the bright appearance and the quick intelligence of the boy impressed him greatly. He noted with delight the rapid progress of his small pupil, and gave him every

encouragement. Indeed, there can be no doubt that the wonderful English of the great author had its roots in Mr. Giles's careful teaching and training.

Mr. Giles's school was one of the few of that time which left a wholesome remembrance in Dickens's mind. He has drawn a loving picture of it in "David Copperfield" in the shape of *Dr. Strong's School.*

"It was very gravely and decorously ordered," he tells us, "and on a sound system; with an appeal in everything to the honor and good faith of the boys, and an avowed intention to rely on the possession of those qualities, unless they proved themselves unworthy of it, which worked wonders."

Mr. Giles must have commanded great admiration and respect among his pupils, if *David's Dr. Strong* might serve as a portrait.

"The Doctor himself was the idol of the whole school; and it must have been a badly composed school, if he had been anything else, for he was the kindest of men; with a simple faith in him that might have touched the stone hearts of the very urns upon the wall."

Charles Dickens, as a schoolboy, must have been a most attractive youngster. He had a brilliant, sensitive face, with long, curly, light hair, which fell in ringlets over his shoulders. Boys of that period must have looked very much like little old men cut short. They wore long and very snug-

fitting trousers, below which peeped their little white-stockinged, slippered feet, and over their short, skimp jackets, fell broad Eton collars. The boys of Mr. Giles's school wore tall white beaver hats, so that in the streets they looked more than ever like old men. But they were boys, bless you! happy, hearty, romp-loving boys, learning in the healthy atmosphere of a good man's influence.

Mr. Giles was quite noted in the small town and its neighborhood, as a fine reader and elocutionist, and of course these accomplishments were made the most of in the school. That Charles took advantage of this rare opportunity for cultivating his own talent, goes without saying.

"Elocution" nowadays is rather laughed at as something too high-flown and absurd to be called a study, but for the child of a hundred years ago, whose very timidity in speaking before his elders gave a hesitating squeak to his voice, it was absolutely necessary to have it trained a little, and declaiming and oratory were the delight of the average schoolboy. Charles Dickens excelled in everything of this kind, and it was his pleasure to amuse himself and his companions, for his was a genial little soul, and despite the fact that he was small and somewhat delicate, his quick wit and originality made him a leader among his mates.

The Dickens children knew nothing of the misfortunes which were crowding down upon their father. Being always poor, the knowledge that

they were poorer did not seem to weigh upon their spirits. Even when he was recalled to London (1822) they little dreamed of the trials in store for them, and John Dickens himself, always happy, always hopeful, always ready for something to "turn up," broke up his home on the Brook on very short notice, disposed of some of his goods and chattels (for it was not so easy then to ship furniture from place to place as it is now), and the whole family, including a small servant-girl from the Chatham workhouse, went by coach to London, sending what heavy goods they could not conveniently part with, by water.

The only one left out of this family party was Charles. Whether it was his own wish, or that the coach was too crowded for even one more very small boy, it is hard to say; at any rate he stayed behind with the schoolmaster, and no doubt in his boy-fashion, said farewell to all his old, much-loved haunts, the Dockyard, the Pay Office, the old Rochester Bridge, over which he had hung and dreamed so many times, the distant hills, the shimmering Medway. But at last came the day of parting, and the small boy, in the white beaver, bade a tearful good-by to his friends, and climbed into the coach which was to take him to London.

Many years later, in an article called "Dullborough Town" (meaning dear old placid, humdrum Chatham) he tells us of this journey:

"As I left Dullborough in the days when there

were no railroads in the land, I left it in a stage-coach. Through all the years that have since passed, have I ever lost the smell of the damp straw in which I was packed — like game — and forwarded, carriage paid to the Cross Keys, Wood Street, Cheapside, London? There was no other inside passenger, and I consumed my sandwiches in solitude and dreariness, and it rained hard all the way, and I thought life sloppier than I had expected to find it. The coach that carried me away was melodiously called Timpson's Blue-eyed Maid, and belonged to Timpson at the coach office up street."

The name *Timpson* is the thin disguise of one Simpson, the real owner of the real Blue-eyed Maid. Another coach going to London from Rochester was the Commodore Coach, driven by a well-known character, old Cholmeley (or Chumley), "who was entrusted with all the young ladies going to town. He made that celebrated speech about coaches, when railways came in. 'If a railway blows up — where are ye? Now, if a coach upsets, *there* ye are!'" which was very comforting at any rate. This old coach driver lived later, in the person of *Tony Weller,* the father of *Sam,* who drove *Mr. Pickwick* and his friends.

The heavy, lumbering traveling coach figures in many of Dickens's novels. It carried little *David Copperfield* to London, or at least to the school near London, and during the holidays an-

other coach brought him home, and again, when his mother died, he left *Salem School* in a great night coach, himself a shivering, frightened child, stifling his sobs in the farthest corner. Poor little *David! he* knew very well what he was going to— a darkened home where everyone disliked him, where he would be pushed and badgered, and at last thrust out. But little Charles Dickens knew nothing of this kind, though, strange as it may seem, he certainly was summoned to London on account of a death in his family, and his journey could not have been of the happiest. He himself says:

"I was taken home, and there was Debt at home, as well as Death [a baby brother], and we had a sale there. My own little bed was so superciliously looked upon by a power unknown to me, hazily called 'The Trade,' that a brass coal-scuttle, a roasting-jack, and a bird cage were obliged to be put into it to make a 'Lot' of it, and then it went for a song — so I heard mentioned, and I wondered what song — and thought what a dismal song it must have been to sing."

It was, indeed, a sad change for this little country boy, coming fresh from green fields and smiling hillsides, where the breath of the early spring was waking the flowers, to this mean home in Bayham Street, Camden Town, where their next-door neighbor was a washerwoman, and a Bow Street officer lived over the way. It was a poor locality

with nothing to attract an imaginative, beauty-loving child. At night the street was very dark, for gas was unknown, and the little twinkling oil lamps used in the city did not shed a very brilliant light. But at least from this unattractive dismal spot, one could see the cupola of St. Paul's looming through the smoke of the city, and that was something to think about in the little back garret in Bayham Street.

We can fancy him lying awake, lonely and miserable, thinking over the family troubles and wondering where they would end, wondering, too, if he should ever be sent to another school, for he longed despairingly to be "taught something anywhere!" He felt this all the more keenly because his sister Fanny, at this time, was admitted as a pupil at the Royal Academy of Music. This was a great honor, which the little girl richly deserved, and it gave her four years' careful training. But it was then that little Charles saw how lightly his own education was looked upon by those who should have seen to it.

It was in this house that the boy began all unconsciously to study the people around him, and to know something of the good qualities which shone out among the poor and needy folk, swallowed up in the murky by-ways of London. Unconsciously, indeed, the delicate little chap was educating himself in those hard days. Withdrawn as he was from any congenial companions in Bay-

ham Street, he was thrown upon his own resources, for his father seemed to forget that he owed his eldest son at least an education. His time instead was spent in cleaning boots, running errands, and looking after the younger children.

Dickens always spoke of his father with love and respect, but there is no doubt that all through the hardships of this never-forgotten period, the easy good-nature of John Dickens, coupled with his empty pocket-book and his ever-hopeful spirit, inspired the portrait of *Wilkins Micawber, Esq.,* that lovable, ne'er-do-weel, who brightened many dark days for little *David Copperfield.*

There was *some* fun to be had even in the cramped quarters at Bayham Street, for James Lamert, who was lodging with them, built a small theater for him, which was a great diversion, and the scene of some remarkable acting. Besides, there were occasional delightful visits to his godfather, Christopher Huffam, who took great pride in the comic songs that Master Charles sang so well. Dickens himself feared that in those early days "he must have been a horrible little nuisance to many unoffending grown-up people who were called upon to admire him."

These were bright spots in the darkest period of our hero's life. In this straitened household, things went from bad to worse, and an awful possibility loomed up before the family. If, after a certain time, John Dickens could not pay his debts,

the bailiffs would arrest him and he would be shut up in a debtor's prison.

There were many such prisons in England, into which strong, active men were shoved by their creditors, until they could be satisfied, thus depriving the poor unfortunates of any means of getting out of their trouble, and often keeping them there for many years. It was to ward off this final blow that Mrs. Dickens decided to move into a better house, in a better street, and open a school for young ladies. This they accordingly did in 1824, renting a house at No. 4, Gower Street. Poor lady! she put a big brass plate on her front door, on which was engraved "Mrs. Dickens' Establishment for Young Ladies," just as poor *Mrs. Micawber* did in "David Copperfield," and *David* further adds: "I never found that any young ladies had ever been there; or that any young lady ever came or proposed to come; or that the least preparation was ever made to receive any young lady." Though the energetic little Charles distributed "at a great many doors, a great many circulars," the Young Ladies' School was never more than a name; the plan simply fell through, and the creditors hurried poor John Dickens off to prison, his last words being like those of the immortal *Mr. Micawber,* who declared that the sun was set upon him forever.

Poor little broken-hearted boy! He thought that surely, for the ill-fated house of Dickens, the

end was not far off. By degrees, they sold everything of any value, the child himself acting as special agent. All the dear books he had brought from Chatham went along with their few valuables, until at last nothing remained but some bits of furniture, and the empty house was shut up — save the two parlors where the whole family encamped, including the little servant from the Chatham workhouse, who later served as a model for some of Dickens's best known characters.

And now came the saddest experience of his whole life — one which he never liked to remember, and to which he never alluded in all the bright and prosperous years which followed. The family was in such dire need that it became necessary for Charles to go to work, and James Lamert, through the very kindest of motives, procured a situation for him in a blacking-warehouse, of which he was the chief manager. There were not many positions open to a boy so young and so small, and the pittance of six or seven shillings a week was thankfully accepted by his parents.

No one will ever know what the delicate, sensitive child endured during the months which followed. His place of business was "a crazy, tumble-down old house, overrun with rats," close by the river, and his work, all the long day, was to cover the pots of paste-blacking, first with oil paper, then with blue paper; to tie them with a string and clip them neatly all round, and finally to attach a

printed label to each bottle. He felt like a little drudge as, hour after hour, he worked away, among companions of such a low class that he shrank in horror from associating with them.

Yet, true to his nature, there was nothing this boy undertook to do that he did not do with his whole soul, and do well. And besides, distasteful as his work was, the idea of being the proud possessor of so many shillings a week — his own earnings — made him feel very grown-up and manly. He would look in the shop windows as he passed along, his fortune jingling in his pockets, and think what it might buy.

But in truth, it was a great help to the family, and it was hoarded and spent very carefully each week, for they were all learning the hard lesson of poverty and privation. It was a new sort of school for our small Charles, but he was quite in earnest when he once said he was willing "to be taught something anywhere," and the blacking-warehouse served its purpose in a certain way.

When writing "David Copperfield" the memory of this dark page of his own life overflowed, and in Chapter XI, he gives us a description of how poor little *David* was thrust by his stepfather, *Mr. Murdstone,* into a similar position. Even *David* himself wrote of this experience only after the passing of many years. He says: "I know enough of the world now, to have almost lost the capacity of being much surprised by anything; but

it is a matter of some surprise to me even now, that I can have been so easily thrown away at such an age. A child of excellent abilities, and with strong powers of observation, quick, eager, delicate, and soon hurt bodily or mentally, it seems wonderful to me that nobody should have made any sign in my behalf. But none was made; and I became, at ten years old, a little laboring hind in the service of Murdstone and Grinby."

In describing their warehouse, he gives the exact location of the blacking-warehouse.

"It was down in Blackfriars. Modern improvements have altered the place; but it was the last house at the bottom of a narrow street, curving down hill to the river, with some stairs at the end, where people took boat. It was a crazy old house, with a wharf of its own, abutting on the water when the tide was in, and on the mud when the tide was out, and literally overrun with rats. Its paneled rooms, discolored with the dirt and smoke of a hundred years, I daresay; its decaying floors and staircase; the squeaking and scuffling of the old gray rats down in the cellars; and the dirt and rottenness of the place . . . are all before me, just as they were in the evil hour when I went among them for the first time.

"No words can express the agony of my soul, as I sunk into this companionship — compared these henceforth everyday associates with those of my happier childhood. . . . and felt my

hopes of growing up to be a learned and distinguished man crushed in my bosom. The deep remembrance of the sense I had of being utterly without hope now — of the shame I felt in my position — of the misery it was to my young heart to believe that day by day, what I had learned, and thought, and delighted in, and raised my fancy and my emulation up by, would pass away from me, little by little, never to be brought back any more — cannot be written."

Poor little *David* — poor little Charles! Yet, after all, *David* was more to be pitied; he had no mother nor father — no brothers and sisters — no one, indeed, just then, who cared whether he lived or died, while the real boy was blessed with more family than he could conveniently support on six shillings a week, and a fund of never-failing humor and drollery, that always managed to get on top somehow.

He describes his companions very much as *David* did, only the boy with "the ragged apron and paper cap" was really named Bob Fagin (a name which Dickens used afterwards in "Oliver Twist") and his other companion was named Paul Green, though he was generally called "Poll" Green.

Both were regular London street-boys, but kind-hearted in their rough way, and once when "the little gentleman," as they called him, had one of his childish attacks, they made a bed for him on the floor of the counting-house, and nursed him as

tenderly as a couple of women. Big Bob Fagin would not even let him go home alone that night, which was rather unfortunate, as the proud child did not want anyone to know that his father was in prison, and that he had a little room just outside, in the very shadow of it.

For by this time Mrs. Dickens found that it would save expense to move into the Marshalsea — as the prison was called — and share her husband's quarters until he was able to secure his release. So she and all the children but Charles and his sister Fanny — who was in the Academy — took up their residence in the old prison, while Charles had this near-by room, which enabled him to take his breakfast with his own family, as soon as the prison gates were opened in the mornings.

A prison sounds like a very terrible spot to most of us, who know it only as a place where very wicked people are shut up as a punishment. But the old-fashioned debtors' prisons — such as the Marshalsea, and Fleet Prison, and the King's Bench — harbored only those who were unfortunate enough not to be able to pay their debts, and they were simply locked up by order of their creditors until they were ready to settle in some way.

Charles's first lodging, after the Gower Street house was given up, was with a Mrs. Roylance, whom the family knew very well, and who supported herself by taking in little children to board, who — for one reason or another — had no one to

take care of them; and it was this same lady whom Charles tucked away in that queer storehouse which he called his mind, as the original of *Mrs. Pipchin,* the reduced lady in "Dombey and Son," to whose house *Little Paul* and *Florence* were sent to board.

This small boy of ten then began housekeeping on his own account; he provided himself in the morning with a penny cottage loaf and a pennyworth of milk, and he always kept another loaf and a small piece of cheese in a certain cupboard for his supper when he came home, and from Monday morning until Saturday night, the little fellow lived his life quite by himself, with no glimpse of his family until Sunday united them all at the Marshalsea. His lodging was paid for by his father, who was in receipt of a small pension from Somerset House, for his long service in the Pay Office; his clothes were attended to by his mother or Mrs. Roylance, but for the rest he was master of himself — body and soul. He could go and come when he liked, and it mattered not a whit to anybody. Many and many a time — in his loneliness — he sobbed himself to sleep, and the wonder of it all is how, with such a responsibility, the small boy of ten could manage to keep himself, as he did, free from the soil and stains of a big city.

His way to and from his work lay along some of the hopeless by-ways of London; he peeped into alleys where poverty and misery went hand in hand; he saw the river at its darkest and dismallest

— he worked, indeed, in the dirt and slime of it — yet through all, he passed with unspoiled innocence, though the memory of these things crept into every book he wrote; and there was never a little boy fashioned by his pen and brain whose pathetic little figure did not bear the marks of this experience.

One thing *could* be remedied, however — the absolute separation from his family. His lodging-place was too far away to see them more than once a week, and so on one memorable Sunday he "had it out" with his father, and probably for the first time John Dickens knew something of the tumult which was stirring the childish heart. Perhaps he realized for the first time how awful it is to be lonely and desolate when one is only ten years old and has to take care of oneself. At any rate a lodging was found for him in Lant Street, nearer the prison — an attic room, with a pleasing view of a timber-yard, but a "paradise" to the boy, who could easily get to the Marshalsea for breakfast. His landlord — a lame, fat, good-natured old gentleman — and his quiet old wife, were very kind to him; there was a grown-up son besides, and we can remember them all better as the *Garland* family in "The Old Curiosity Shop."

Indeed, no human being ever passed unnoticed before those observing young eyes, and as early as this he began jotting down little rough sketches of people and things, but generally people. These

were most probably stuffed in his trousers pockets or in some hiding-place known only to childhood — and more especially to boyhood — and quite as probably forgotten or thrown away, for no record of any early bits of childish writing has been handed down to us. Indeed, between the ages of ten and twelve, business cares were too heavy even to allow time for thought.

His greatest treats in those days were his Saturday nights. He got off early from his work, and usually strolled home through a well-known street, where there were show-vans at the corner, and where for a very small sum he could see the "Fat-pig," the "Wild-Indian" and the "Little-lady," all dreams of the street-boy of those days. Often he would be tempted to buy the stale pastry displayed in the bakers' windows, and there was a favorite pudding to be had at a penny a slice — very heavy and very flabby — with raisins stuck in it, but substantial enough to give him a dinner.

The boys in the blacking-warehouse had half an hour for tea. When little Charles had money enough he used to get a half a pint of coffee and a slice of bread and butter, and when he had no money, he used to go to the Covent-Garden market and stare at the pineapples. One coffee-room he remembers particularly; it had an oval glass in the door, on which was painted "COFFEE-ROOM." Inside, with the door shut it read backwards thus, "MOOR-EEFFOC," and no matter how often,

in after years, Dickens saw that same transformation, the little boy — lonely and pathetic — munching his slice of bread and drinking his coffee, rose up before him with startling distinctness. But of these things he never spoke in after years; even to his own family his lips were sealed; for he had worn the chains of a slave in that year of servitude, as surely as if they had hung in iron fastness about his small wrists.

How long he stayed in the warehouse he was never quite sure; a year was the outside limit, and yet each month had seemed an age in itself, but his release came in a sudden way, as these things usually happen. His father had most unexpectedly come into possession of a small legacy, which enabled him to pay his debts and get out of prison. Of course there was great rejoicing in the family, and even Charles began to look forward again to something more than his daily drudgery. He was not a boy who *said* very much; very quick to see and feel himself, he gave people credit for feelings *they* never possessed, and as the weeks went by, it was clearly to be seen that his position at the warehouse was accepted as a matter of course and that there was no idea of his giving it up.

A sort of dumb despair took hold of the child, and when he went with the others to see his sister Fanny take a prize at the Academy, his poor little heart was torn between his pride in her and his misery over his own seemingly hopeless lot. It

was not envy, for the brother and sister were always very close in their love for each other, but the boy, too, was ambitious, and tying and labeling blacking-bottles all day long seemed a very poor future indeed.

He grew to be dexterous in handling his work, and he and Bob Fagin — who worked near a window — always attracted a little crowd of curious people. By chance one day, his father came to the warehouse, passing through the throng of onlookers, and something like shame must have touched this good-humored, easy-going man. The fact that his own son was doing work which he himself would have scorned, woke him to a sense of the injustice which had been done. Soon after that, he wrote James Lamert a letter, no doubt finding fault with the position Charles held in the employ of one so closely connected with the family, and the result was a quarrel and Charles's dismissal from the warehouse. He could scarcely believe his senses as he walked home that last night. The relief was almost painful, and when his father announced that he was to go to school, no doubt the small boy felt that the end of the world had really come.

He was not quite twelve when he left the warehouse — and still very small for his age — and from that time this dreadful experience was blotted from all their lives. His father and mother never referred to it in any way, and the boy himself pushed it far behind him. It gave a touch of re-

serve to this otherwise genial and sociable youngster; it also gave a manly self-reliance that pulled him later through many difficulties; and also a strong, set purpose to succeed, while in the background of his memory were hidden the shadowy figures of his working companions, ready to rise out of the mists and become living realities at the touch of his magic pen.

And that pen, too — though probably it was only a pencil in the small work-stained hand — had not been idle. Life in the Marshalsea Prison — at least, what time he spent there — had been more interesting than life at the blacking-warehouse, and the many queer people he had met there were a never-ending source of amusement. The character of *Wilkins Micawber* grew day by day, as the quiet little son sat apart and watched his genial, happy-go-lucky father, whom he loved; and in spite of much that we may find to laugh at and shake our heads over in *Mr. Micawber,* we, too, cannot help loving a character drawn with such gentle accuracy. In describing his visits to the *Micawbers* in prison, Dickens hands over his own experience to little *David,* for this is what he says:

"The only changes I am conscious of are, first, that I had grown more shabby; and secondly, that I was now relieved of much of the weight of Mr. and Mrs. Micawber's cares, for some relatives or friends had engaged to help them at their present pass, and they lived more comfortably in the prison

than they had lived for a long time while out of it. I used to breakfast with them now, by virtue of some arrangement of which I have forgotten the details. I forget, too, at what hour the gates were opened in the morning, admitting of my going in; but I know that I was often up at six o'clock, and that my favorite lounging place, in the interval, was old London Bridge, where I was wont to sit in one of the stone recesses, watching the people going by, or to look over the balustrades at the sun shining in the water, and lighting up the golden flame at the top of the Monument."

Word for word this is the true history of little Charles Dickens at that time, and often his vigils on the Bridge were shared by the little maid-of-all-work, who was faithful to the family. She, too, had lodgings near by, and when they met, Charles would amuse himself by weaving wonderful tales of the wharves and the Tower, which set the simple country girl gaping with amazement.

In practical everyday life this child of the Chatham workhouse had little sharp worldly ways which were most amusing, and furnished the boy with much food for fancy. She was made use of as the years went by, first, as the *Orfling* in the Micawber household, and again in the pathetic figure of the *Marchioness* in "Old Curiosity Shop," and many lighter sketches of her flit through the great author's books. When they left the prison, all its memories lingered with the little fellow, for,

feeble as had been its glow, the Marshalsea — with its swarm of odd people, its dinginess, its thousand and one discomforts — had for a brief time shone with the light of home to this homeless child.

CHAPTER III.

THE LITTLE DICKENSES AT HOME.

FTER John Dickens's release from prison, we hear very little about the money troubles of the family. That they were poor, goes without saying, but the cloud of debt no longer hung over them, and what was left of the legacy, together with the pension from the Pay Office, was enough to keep them above want.

No doubt the experiences through which they had passed had left their trace upon the characters of all the little Dickenses. Indeed, how could it be otherwise! Every one of us, from the youngest to the oldest, is likely to be touched by the light or shadow of our surroundings. But of one thing we may be certain — the love of home was a sturdy evergreen, flourishing in the heart of every child.

In their short lives they had known many homes, but they all had the happy faculty of considering any walls that formed even a temporary shelter, in the light of a home; and in after years, when the great novelist had a thousand themes to choose from, he always sang sweetest when he sang of home.

Boys and girls are usually made of the right stuff when they have a fondness for home, and a home must be a very cheerless place, indeed, that cannot hold its flock together. The little we know of John Dickens showed him to be of a genial, sunny disposition, and though the raising of a large family and the straitened means of the household kept Mrs. Dickens very much in the background, she must have been a woman blessed with the gift of home-making.

For a short time after the gates of the Marshalsea had opened to let them out, the whole family lodged with Mrs. Roylance until they could find some suitable place; from there they went to Hampstead, where they took a house, but this must have proved too expensive, for finally — in 1825 — they settled in a cheap part of London, called Somer's Town. The house was very small and poor-looking, but in spite of many drawbacks, they made a home of it for four years, during which time many changes marked the lives of the little Dickenses.

To begin with, Charles was sent to school. What this meant to the boy, no one knew; but unfortunately this school did not prove all that his family had pictured. It was called Wellington House Academy, and was kept by one William Jones. It was one of those places where study was forced by means of the ferule; where the master was a man of no learning whatever, leaving the hard

work of teaching to one of the ushers, who was supposed to know everything.

In a quaint little reminiscence called "Our School," Dickens gives us a vivid description of William Jones, the Master.

"The only branches of education," he tells us, "with which he had the least acquaintance, were ruling and corporally punishing. He was always ruling ciphering-books with a bloated mahogany ruler, or smiting the palms of offenders, with the same diabolical instrument. . . .

"We were old enough to be put into 'Virgil' when we went there, and to get Prizes for a variety of polishing on which the rust has long accumulated. It was a School of some celebrity in its neighborhood — nobody could have said why — and we had the honor to attain and hold the eminent position of first boy."

As *Mr. Creakle* of *Salem School* in "David Copperfield," we perhaps get even a better idea of Mr. Jones's harshness and absolute cruelty in dealing with the boys. Tweaking their ears was a favorite pastime, which poor little *David* had to endure constantly.

Even in school, our small Charles used his young observant eyes to great advantage; the boys, who were his mates, impressed him greatly, not so much by their prowess, as by their peculiarities, which were stowed away for future use in future books, for the Dickens schoolboy is a study in itself, and

he has painted so many and such real ones that we feel quite sure that he knew them all.

"The principal currency of Our School was slate-pencil. It had some inexplicable value, that was never ascertained, never reduced to a standard. To have a great hoard of it was somehow to be rich. We used to bestow it in charity, and confer it as a precious boon upon our chosen friends. When the holidays were coming, contributions were solicited for certain boys whose relatives were in India. . . ."

These boys were called "Holiday-stoppers" because, having no homes to go to during the holidays, they stopped in school; so the sympathetic boys who *had* homes bestowed tokens of sympathy upon the homeless ones — in the shape of slate-pencils.

Not to have a home to frolic in at Christmas time, would have been a dread calamity to anyone named Dickens; and that is why the poor little "Holiday-stoppers" appealed so to Charles — for no matter how poor they were, the Christmas-Tree was planted wherever the little Dickenses chanced to be. Sometimes the gifts were mere pretenses, but there was the glamour of the Tree always, and half a dozen vivid imaginations to make something out of nothing.

By this time another little boy had been added to the family group — the youngest and last — and specially notable on account of his name, Augustus,

which his older brother laughingly set aside — and called him *Moses* instead. Still in a joking way he often pronounced it through his nose — *Boses* — this he shortened into *Boz,* which nickname clung to the youngster until several years later, when the budding author took it for his own pen-name, and the fame of " Boz " grew, before the fame of Dickens was thought of.

Now with six children — the oldest not quite sixteen — home was a most interesting spot. There was always something going on; there was always chatter or laughter, mischief or fun, and especially where there was mischief there beyond a doubt was the master hand of Charles himself, for he was bubbling over with spirits, in those early days of release from the blacking-warehouse, and the wild pranks he played were too many to be counted.

All holidays were festivals to these children, and when there were no holidays, there was always the toy theatre. This was a never-ending source of amusement, for it looked quite like the real thing, even to the paper ladies in the boxes. The actors connected with this wonderful triumph of paste and glue and water-colors were the most talented of puppets, whose legs and arms worked by wire or string, and they certainly did perform queer antics at the most exciting moments. The plays themselves, " The Miller and his Men " and " Elizabeth, the Exile of Siberia " and many others with the same high-sounding titles, were always written

by Charles himself, who, even at the advanced age of thirteen, was never at a loss for a plot or a situation.

Christmas marked the height of happiness in the Dickens household. There was always the Tree, as early as Charles could remember, and his childish fancy of course painted that home Christmas-Tree in glowing colors. Here is what he tells us about the very earliest Christmas-Tree:

"Straight, in the middle of the room, cramped in the freedom of its growth by no encircling walls or soon-reached ceiling, a shadowy tree arises; and, looking up into the dreamy brightness of its top — for I observe in this tree the singular property that it appears to grow downward towards the earth — I look into my youngest Christmas recollections."

He tells us of the singular toys of his day — "the Tumbler, with his hands in his pockets, who wouldn't lie down, but whenever he was put up on the floor, persisted in rolling his fat body about, until he rolled himself still, and brought those lobster eyes of his to bear upon me" — which frightened the small child into a nervous laugh.

Then there was a certain fat old Counselor in a box with a spring, who popped out at one with a "gobble-you-up" expression that haunted one's dreams; and a Mask most terrible to look at. The imaginative child had a horror of this Mask.

"Nothing reconciled me to it," he wrote. "No drummers from whom proceeded a melancholy

chirping on the turning of a handle; no regiment of soldiers with a mute band, taken out of a box and fitted, one by one, upon a stiff and lazy little set of lazy tongs; no old woman made of wires and a brown paper composition, cutting up pie for two small children, could give me a permanent comfort for a long time. Nor was it any satisfaction to be shown the Mask and see that it was made of paper, or to have it locked up, and be assured that no one wore it. The mere recollection of that fixed face, the mere knowledge of its existence anywhere, was sufficient to wake me in the night — all perspiration and horror — with 'Oh, I know it's coming — Oh, the Mask!'"

He liked the dear old donkey, with the panniers and a coat of real hair; and the great black horse with red nostrils and unusual red spots all over him, upon whose willing back he could easily climb and gallop away to the Land of Nowhere.

The Dickens family certainly made much of Christmas and delighted in giving presents. We are told about a wonderful doll's house "of which I was not the proprietor, but where I visited. I don't admire the Houses of Parliament half so much as that stone-fronted mansion, with real glass windows, and door-steps and a real balcony — greener than I ever see now, except at watering-places; and even they afford but a poor imitation."

Boy-like, he was particularly attracted by the kitchen of this elegant mansion, where a tin man-

cook was forever frying two fish on the "make-believe" stove. And he remembered vividly a certain tea-party, where he struck the fashionable company with consternation, by swallowing a little pewter tea-spoon which he had dissolved in the hot tea.

Those were jolly days of Christmas trees, before hardships came upon the little Dickenses, but we must not think that the holidays lost their zest because the family was poorer. Even the Marshalsea had its celebrations — and where there was a peep-hole where fun could escape, the little Dickenses caught it.

There was always music and singing and acting to enliven them. Fanny was fast becoming an accomplished young musician, and Charles always had a decided taste for singing. While at Wellington House Academy he took a few violin lessons, though, not being a genius in that direction, he made no progress and soon gave it up. But he became quite famous in the literary line; his first bit of editorial work was called "Our Newspaper," done jointly with another boy, and written on scraps of copy-book paper. They circulated it on payment of marbles and pieces of slate pencil.

"This paper," writes the other boy, "used to contain sundry bits of boyish fun — the following I recollect —

> "'*Lost* Out of a gentleman's waistcoat pocket an acre of land; the finder shall be rewarded on restoring the same.

"'*Lost* By a boy with a long red nose and grey eyes, a very bad temper. Whoever has found the same may keep it, as the owner is better without it.'"

There was another boy named Beverley, afterwards a great scene-painter, who practiced his budding art on various school plays written by Charles. "There can be no doubt," we are told, "that under the joint management of two such boys as Dickens and Beverley, these theatrical performances must have been considerably in advance of the ordinary juvenile theatricals to be then found in schools." Naturally these plays were often performed at home, and the genial, fun-loving boy brought his friends also into the home circle when he could.

Unlike most geniuses, Charles Dickens, with the exception of certain majestic blank verse to be found in his boyish efforts at drama, spent little time in verse making. Most children — gifted in his way — find some early expression in rhyme, which is often real, though somewhat crude poetry, but little of that sort of thing has come down to us from the pen of the great novelist. The secret sketches he made of the people with whom he came in daily contact, were always clever bits of prose with a dash of vigorous color here and there. A bit of doggerel once in a while — the outcome of some boyish joke — he might have indulged in, but they fluttered out of sight along with the pieces of paper on which they were scribbled.

The small lad, small in spite of his teens, was studying people instead of poetry, and "learning all the time," his biographer tells us, though the actual knowledge he obtained from Wellington House Academy was neither very extensive nor very wholesome. He may not have known it, but the year's experience at the blacking-warehouse did more to set him on his literary way than all the limited schooling of his life. Added to this, as we know, was his love of home, which crept into all the best of his novels and his stories.

We know, too, that home to the Dickens children did not always mean a place of beauty and of comfort, it did not always mean the same place, for no family moved quite as often as they did, unless it was the homeless poor on the London streets. Yet they were never so happy as when all together under the same roof, and we have seen how miserable poor little Charles was, when the Marshalsea gates shut him out from his family.

Of all the children, he and Fanny had known better times; they could remember the Chatham days of comparative peace and plenty. Charles in particular could amuse the younger ones with anecdotes of the quaint, sleepy old place and its people, and being a good mimic, there is no doubt that he regaled the little Dickenses with performances which would have done him credit before a larger audience.

This small boy had his own original ideas of

what a home should be; a home with a bright fire, a cheery hearth, and a kettle on the hob — a good old-fashioned home, where love was not afraid of poverty, and many a home he has drawn for us — where we love to linger.

In " The Cricket on the Hearth " we get the very brightest picture. The wild night outside — forgotten by the coziness within — the singing of the Kettle — the chirping of the Cricket — the plump comeliness of little *Mrs. Dot* — all waiting for the big *Carrier,* with frosted eyebrows and icicles hanging from his clothes, to burst in and add the finishing touch. The cricket chirping on the family hearth was considered a good omen. *Dot* thought so, and said as much to her big husband:

" ' This has been a happy home, John; and I love the Cricket for its sake!'

" ' Why so do I then '— said the Carrier, ' so do I, Dot!'

" ' I love it for the many times I've heard it and the many thoughts its harmless music has given me. Sometimes in the twilight, when I have felt a little solitary and down-hearted, before baby was here to keep me company and make the house gay . . . its Chirp, Chirp, Chirp, upon the hearth has seemed to tell me of another little voice, so sweet, so very dear to me, before whose coming sound my trouble vanished like a dream. And when I used to fear — I *did* fear once, John, I was very young you know — that ours might prove an

ill-assorted marriage — I being such a child, and you more like my guardian than my husband; . . . its Chirp, Chirp, Chirp, has cheered me up again, and filled me with new trust and confidence. I was thinking of these things to-night, dear, when I was expecting you, and I love the Cricket for their sake.' "

We cannot help wondering if the little Dickenses had a Cricket on their hearth. They had a Cricket without a doubt, for their older brother's sunny humor pervaded the household. His was a nature singularly young always, and forgiving. As the one dark year of his life sank farther and farther out of sight, his real boyishness rose to the top. He became ringleader in many harmless pranks — and was the inventor of a wonderful language known only to himself and his intimates; and the toy theater served as a stage setting for the many attempted dramas and melodramas which were born in his active brain just then.

There is little to record of Dickens at this time, beyond the fanciful biography of *David Copperfield*. His was a restless, inquiring mind; the quick, active movements — full of unstudied grace — the bright eyes and brighter speeches, made a great impression upon all with whom he came in contact, and sometimes the wild spirit of the boy burst forth, and the little Dickenses looked on and wondered.

Two years of schooling were quite enough for

our untamed Charles. He went long enough to see that a mere room with benches and desks, and a master who used his mahogany ruler with such deadly effect, was not a place where *he* was likely to learn anything more than he knew already.

There is a kindly silence on the subject, but it is very much to be feared, from hints dropped in the clever articles of later years, that Master Charles's spirit of mischief often got him into hot water at the Wellington House Academy. Once — if we can believe the thinly-veiled disguise in "Our School" — he wrote a tragedy in blank verse ridiculing one of the parlor boarders.

"This production," he tells us, "was received with great favor and was twice performed with closed doors in the dining-room. But it got wind and was seized as libelous, and brought the unlucky poet into severe affliction," which meant in other words, a good sound thrashing.

"Our School," he further adds, "was remarkable for white mice. Red-polls, linnets, and even canaries were kept in desks, drawers, hat-boxes and other strange refuges for birds; but white mice were the favorite stock. The boys trained the mice, much better than the masters trained the boys. We recall one white mouse, who lived in the cover of a Latin dictionary, who ran up ladders, drew Roman chariots, shouldered muskets, turned wheels, and even made a very creditable appearance on the stage, as the Dog of Montargis. He

might have achieved greater things, but for having the misfortune to mistake his way in a triumphal procession to the Capitol, when he fell into a deep inkstand and was dyed black and drowned."

This special mouse belonged to a company of boys who showed much ingenuity and clever engineering in planning their houses, and many of them rose afterwards to prominent places as engineers in larger fields. Mr. Jones little thought — as he sat all the day ruling ciphering-books and feruling small boys — that a pair of bright eyes was watching every motion of the large, cruel hands, and the poor head usher, "who knew everything," little thought that some day he would get into a famous book and become in some indirect way the instrument for mending the fortunes of many a poor underpaid usher like himself.

It was in the pathetic character of *Mr. Mell,* the poor usher at Salem School in "David Copperfield," that we first see him, but he flits through many books in many different guises — always poor and proud, ill-fed, ill-clad, and ill-paid.

Yes, all through this, the last real schooling of his life, little Charles was studying men instead of mathematics. He never made much of a mark at school, though he was a great favorite with the boys, whose thirst for hearing stories he could thoroughly satisfy.

Nothing the small boy loved so well as to hold spell-bound an audience of active, restless school-

boys, and all of the old half-forgotten tales which he had absorbed in happy days at Chatham, were retold in his own peculiar way with many additions most likely, which were none the worse for the story. The "Arabian Nights" were also revived among the children at home, and many a thrill went through the ranks of the little Dickenses, in listening to these tales of wonder, for the boy had all the gifts of the good story-teller, to which was added a great deal of dramatic fire, which put new life into every tale he told.

He had grown considerably during those two years of schooling, though he was still below the average height of a boy of fourteen; but he had outgrown all his childish ailments, and had developed into an active, sturdy fellow, fond of out-of-door sports and athletics, but fondest of all of poking about in the dim and grimy by-ways of London, which he had grown to know only too well, in the old dark days.

He loved the River and the shipping — he loved the Bridge over which he had leaned so many times — he loved the pungent odor of the water — but most of all he loved the people who haunted such places — the poor of London; the people, shabby, ill-clothed, uncared-for, who hurried by him in the streets — the women with shawls over their heads — the slouching men with their caps drawn over their eyes — the very children, looking like shriveled old men and women.

Had anyone questioned him, he would not have been able to explain — boy as he was — the fascination that the streets of London held for him. In his many walks about the city he was never conscious of any purpose. Yet *David Copperfield,* in describing *his* walks, says: "I looked at nothing that I know of, but I saw everything," and this was precisely the case with Charles Dickens, as it is with all quick and observant youngsters.

But the interest of this boy was sharpened by many a prick of memory; by the memory of the time when a miserable, overworked little soul had trudged these streets as in a dream, fighting a bitter battle, and every time the small and shabby figure of a boy appeared, memory came also and stalked beside it.

He grew to know the "lingo" of the streets as well as any street-boy, and he mimicked the cockney accent to perfection, much to the amusement of all who heard him. But they were only amused; they never knew that, beneath all the boyish flippancy, a something very tender, very human, was stirring in its sleep — a great absorbing love of the poor — sympathy with their joys and sorrows — a sincere wish to help them — to make the world hear their cry — a wish to tell people of the life that went on from day to day, year to year, on the streets or in their meager homes, the tragedy and the comedy of it all.

And this, the boy with the bright, quick-seeing

eyes, was studying much harder than he did Latin and History at the Wellington House Academy, and this was in his mind when he was cracking jokes among his mates, or telling stories to the little Dickenses, around their own home fire. Fantastic, shuddering tales they often were, with pictures drawn from the very heart of the blaze.

He did not know what the future held for him when he left school, or, indeed, that it held anything beyond the position "as office boy in an attorney's firm," as the old song has it. For work was necessary in the Dickens family, and Charles had had a long holiday. The other boys, too, needed their "bit of schooling," so he must give way.

College was not even hinted at — even the boy himself had neither such hope nor ambition. Besides, the old home tie still held him; he did not mind laboring by day, with the prospect of a family reunion when work was over. So, still a little under size, though able-bodied and trustworthy, Charles Dickens set forth to seek his fortune in the office of a Mr. Molloy, a solicitor, little dreaming, as he tapped modestly at the door, that fame stepped quietly with him over the threshold.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FIRST START IN LIFE.

HARLES DICKENS was somewhere between fourteen and fifteen years old when he began at the bottom of the ladder as office boy to Mr. Molloy, the solicitor, and there was not much of incident in his short career there. The office boys were just important enough in their own estimation to have the utmost contempt for the schoolboy ranks which supplied most of the business recruits. These boys put on a mannish swagger and "clubbed" together for their suppers, like the clerks above them, and imagined that they "saw life"—poor little half-fledged chaps! Funny little fellows, too, they must have been (something like the numerous "buttons" that cross our path to-day), with their quick tongues, their sharp eyes, and a certain surprising agility, which made them invaluable for running errands in those telephoneless days.

The office boy of Dickens's day was certainly busy from morning till night.

> He washed the windows and he swept the floor,
> And he polished up the handle of the big front door.

In short, he saw that the musty, fusty old offices where most lawyers herded were at least brushed up to something like the semblance of order.

Dickens describes these offices so graphically in his various books that we can see the very cobwebs hanging from the ceilings. In "Pickwick," his earliest book, he describes a whole nest of them:

"Scattered about in various holes and corners of the Temple, are certain dark and dirty chambers, in and out of which, all the morning in Vacation, and half the evening in Term-time, there may be seen, constantly hurrying, with bundles of papers under their arms, and protruding from their pockets, an almost uninterrupted succession of Lawyers' Clerks. . . .

"These sequestered nooks are the public offices of the legal profession. . . . They are, for the most part, low-roofed, moldy rooms, where innumerable rolls of parchment, which have been perspiring in secret for the last century, send forth an agreeable odor, which is mingled by day with the scent of the dry-rot, and by night with the various exhalations which arise from damp cloaks, festering umbrellas, and the coarsest tallow candles."

Even in smoky, foggy London, the character of the lawyer's office has changed a great deal, and the office boy's duties are not so heavy as in 1827. But when Charles Dickens was a boy he had not only to scrub the floor, but to carry his own water

from the pump, which was no easy task if it chanced to be winter and there was more than one bucketful needed for the job. But everything this boy did, he did well, and there is little doubt that Mr. Molloy's floors were pretty thoroughly scrubbed during the short time that he was there, for in May, 1827, he became a regular clerk in the office of Messrs. Ellis and Blackmore, attorneys, of Gray's Inn, where he stayed for a year and a half.

His father and mother fondly believed that his position in life was now assured. There were many grades of clerks in the practice of the law, and what better apprenticeship could the boy have than in this daily association with lawyers and their methods! What better, indeed, could young Dickens have had, though not along the lines his parents had hoped for! He was studying, to be sure, but what he learned was certainly not to be found in the dusty law-books!

Had our Charles been a different sort of a boy, a lawyer's office would have been the very worst place he could have chosen for a start in life. Here he came in contact with every side of the law. He knew the clever lawyer, the tricky lawyer, the rising lawyer; he knew the lawyer with brains, and the lawyer without, and he has had something to say about them in every book he has written — from the first to the last.

It was rather unusual to be a lawyer's clerk at the age of fifteen, but this was an unusual boy, he

could be trusted with very special and particular messages, and he knew his London, from one end of the vast city to the other, as probably few people knew it, and this made him useful in many round-about ways known only to lawyers and their clients.

This bright-eyed youngster, seemingly absorbed in the duties of a junior clerk, was in reality studying the characters that passed as it were under his very nose; he was studying the law on every side and in every light; boy as he was, he was quick to discover the joke of it — the muddle of it all — and all the serious things connected with it.

At Ellis and Blackmore's the clerks kept an account book, where the office expenses were regularly entered. His own salary was ten shillings a week at first, which was increased to fifteen before he left. The clerks took turns in entering the accounts, and Dickens's handwriting came from January to March, 1828, while his autograph was on the fly-leaf, and here and there through the book occurred such names as Weller, Mrs. Bardell, Corney, Rudge, and Newman Knott, all of whom, with some slight changes, are very familiar characters in Dickens's own books — names which, as we see, he calmly took, as he probably took many little peculiarities along with them.

Always of a social nature, Dickens readily made friends among the clerks. His first friend, Thomas Mitton, proved to be such a congenial one that the intercourse was kept up for many

years, and at Ellis and Blackmore's he found a most entertaining companion in a young man named Potter, a fellow clerk, though somewhat beyond him in age and official position. They often went to the theaters as both were fond of that sort of amusement, and on more than one occasion they actually appeared themselves, in small parts. Of course Dickens used him as a character in two of his "Sketches by Boz," and there was something about him which faintly suggested the rollicking, good-natured rascal, *Alfred Jingle* in "Pickwick."

In one of the "Sketches" he describes *Mr. Thomas Potter,* not even attempting to disguise his name:

"Mr. Thomas Potter, then, was a clerk in the city, and Mr. Robert Smithers [a caricature of himself perhaps] was a ditto in the same; their incomes were limited, but their friendship was unbounded. They lived in the same street, walked into town every morning at the same hour, dined at the same slap-bang every day, and reveled in each other's company every night. They were knit together by the closest ties of intimacy and friendship, or, as Mr. Thomas Potter touchingly observed, they were 'thick and thin pals, and nothing but it.' There was a spice of romance in Mr. Smithers' disposition, a ray of poetry, a gleam of misery, a sort of consciousness of — he didn't exactly know what, coming across him — he didn't

precisely know why — which stood out in fine relief against the off-hand, daring manner which distinguished Mr. Potter in an eminent degree."

In another "Sketch" he is described as *Jones,* the barrister's clerk —"capital company — full of anecdote!"

Indeed, in those days, young Charles had all the admiration for Potter that a small boy usually has for a big one, and yet — though in a mild way he followed the great creature — he also captured him, and not only popped him into his "Sketches," but turned and twisted and distorted him into a dozen different lawyers' clerks in different lawyers' offices.

Ah! those law offices! how he knew them — from the Doctors Commons to the office of the smallest solicitor among the Inns, as most of the lawyers' offices were called. It was not so very many years after he gave up all thoughts of being a lawyer that he began his "Sketches," and one of these, called "Doctors Commons," gives a very good idea of what that branch of the law really was, with a hearty laugh at the fat Judge and the be-wigged or be-robed advocates or proctors. The English law in those days was very pompous, very consequential, and in many cases very stupid, and Charles Dickens found this out in the nick of time, to save himself from becoming one of the flock.

He never forgot the many little scenes which passed before him in Ellis and Blackmore's offices,

and Mr. Blackmore himself said: "I am much mistaken if some of his characters had not their originals in persons I well remember," and if the list of names in the office account-book can be relied upon those must have been the very people.

"During these eighteen months," writes Mr. Langton, one of his numerous biographers, "Charles Dickens must have seen a great deal of the ordinary routine of a lawyer's office, and accordingly we have, throughout his works, lawyers of almost every possible shade and variety, from *Mr. Sampson Brass* to *Mr. Tulkinghorn,* and from *Solomon Pell* to *Mr. Grewgious.*

"Of firms of solicitors besides those introduced into the tales, such as *Snitchey and Craggs, Dodson and Fogg, Kenge and Carboys,* and others, are some highly characteristic names of firms incidentally mentioned in 'Pickwick,' where at Sergeants' Inn they were called out . . . in tenor and bass voices —'Sniggle and Blink, Parkin and Snob, Stumpy and Deacon.'"

Dickens had a happy knack of fitting his names to his characters, and that is the reason why one is apt to recall the characters from his books with such readiness. We know, for instance, what kind of lawyers composed the firm of *Dodson and Fogg,* or *Sniggle and Blink,* or *Parkin and Snob. Sampson Brass* we know was a close-fisted, money-loving swindler, and *Dick Swiveller,* much as we admire his many good traits, suggests at once a

great fondness for beer, and a general seediness that often goes side by side with the underpaid lawyer's clerk. One of the best named characters is that of the office-boy of *Mr. Mortimer Lightwood* in "Our Mutual Friend." Here is an excellent picture of *Young Blight:*

"Whosoever had gone out of Fleet Street into the Temple at the date of this history, and had wandered disconsolate about the Temple until he had stumbled on a dismal churchyard, and had looked up at the dismal windows commanding that churchyard, until at the most dismal window of all he saw a most dismal boy, would in him have beheld at one grand comprehensive swoop of the eye, the managing clerk, common-law clerk, conveyancing clerk, chancery clerk, every refinement and department of clerk of Mr. Mortimer Lightwood, erstwhile called in the newspapers, eminent solicitor."

By this, we know, without further explanation, that *Mr. Mortimer Lightwood* did a very small law business, and that *Young Blight* had a most appropriate name.

But names as yet meant nothing to Charles Dickens, beyond some happy thought which they might have suggested. He was growing up, and the by-ways of the law did not suit him at all. He began to have an ardent longing to get into print somehow, but there were very few means of geting there — that was the trouble.

About this time his father became a reporter for the *Morning Herald,* a most interesting occupation, for this special branch of reporting was devoted to parliamentary work, and the boy conceived a sudden desire to follow in his father's footsteps. But to become a reporter was no easy matter, especially as this poor little lawyer's clerk had his hands full all day, and a reporter's work consisted first and foremost of a complete and thorough knowledge of shorthand.

Once having made up his mind that he wanted to do a thing, our friend Charles was pretty apt to do it. He made up his mind to leave the law to its spiders and its cobwebs, to come out from the dark corners and see the light of day among people — always among people — but he could not sacrifice his fifteen shillings a week for anything less certain. This young fellow, though not quite seventeen, knew only too well the value of even a little money, and anything he wished to do in the way of fitting himself for any other field had to be done either late at night while others slept, or in the early dawn before their own noisy little household was astir.

He said nothing to anyone, he bought a book on shorthand, and set to work in right good earnest. He had a quick mind and a retentive memory, and never spared himself in any task which he thought worth doing. He gives a humorous account of his struggles in " David Copperfield," for

that young gentleman went through exactly the same experience.

"'I'll buy a book (said *David*) with a good scheme of this art in it; I'll work at it at the Commons where I haven't half enough to do; I'll take down the speeches in our court for practice.'"

This was bravely spoken by our young hero, *David,* just then in the first throes of his passion for *Dora,* the little fairy daughter of his employer, *Mr. Spenlow. David* consulted his friend, *Tommy Traddles,* one of his old school-mates from the far-away *Salem School,* and the result was that *Traddles* made inquiries for his friend, as to the requirements of a parliamentary reporter.

"Traddles now informed me . . . that the mere mechanical acquisition necessary . . . for thorough excellence in it, that is to say, a perfect and entire command of the mystery of shorthand writing and reading, was about equal in difficulty to the mastery of six languages, and that it might perhaps be attained by dint of perseverance in the course of a few years. Traddles reasonably supposed that this would settle the business, but I, only feeling that here indeed were a few tall trees to be hewn down, immediately resolved to work my way on to Dora, through this thicket, ax in hand.

"'I'm very much obliged to you, my dear Traddles,' said I, 'I'll begin to-morrow!'"

David was some years older than Charles Dickens when he struck for liberty, but he was not one whit more determined.

Stenography was then, as it is to-day, a most complicated study, but the modern books on the subject have been so simplified that, with careful training, the average schoolgirl or boy can master the problem in a very short time. But in Dickens's day, only the favored few, chiefly newspaper reporters and court reporters, were ever skillful enough to be expert stenographers, and the few books which the ambitious little law clerk was able to consult nearly drove him mad. Like *David Copperfield,* he "plunged into a sea of perplexity."

"The changes rung upon dots," he tells us, "which in such a position meant such a thing, and in such another position, something else entirely different; the wonderful vagaries that were played by circles; the unaccountable consequences that resulted from marks like flies' legs; the tremendous effects of a curve in a wrong place; not only troubled my waking hours, but reappeared before me in my sleep. When I had groped my way, blindly, through these difficulties, and had mastered the alphabet which was an Egyptian Temple in itself, there then appeared a procession of new horrors, called arbitrary characters; the most despotic characters I have ever known; who insisted for instance that a thing like the beginning of a cobweb meant expectation, and that a pen-and-ink

sky-rocket stood for disadvantageous. When I had fixed these wretches in my mind, I found that they had driven everything else out of it; then beginning again, I forgot them; while I was picking them up, I dropped the other fragments of the system; in short it was almost heartbreaking . . ." but *David* was undaunted. "Every scratch in the scheme was a gnarled oak in the forest of difficulty, and I went on cutting them down one after another, with such vigor, that in three or four months I was in a condition to make an experiment on one of our crack speakers in the Commons. Shall I ever forget how the crack speaker walked off from me before I began, and left my imbecile pencil staggering about the paper as if it were in a fit!"

If this was *David's* experience at about twenty-two or three, that of poor little Charles Dickens, aged seventeen, must have been even more trying. Many and many a failure he made, and many and laughable were his mistakes. Like *David,* he pressed his family into service, and flung himself — note-book and pencil in hand — on the mercy of anyone who would deliver a speech for his especial benefit, and the faster the words flew, the faster traveled the pencil of this ambitious young reporter. Sometimes, he tells us, his pencil jumped around in such a ridiculous manner, chasing the obliging orator, that Charles himself was puzzled when it came to reading his own shorthand, but

that was merely nervousness, which he soon overcame.

He haunted the courts, he attended public speaking, he never missed the smallest opportunity for improving his shorthand, and all through his own perseverance and industry, for his sole instruction came from the text-books which he was able to buy, and from those which he consulted later in the British Museum, books of information on general subjects. He was quick-witted enough to understand what a very limited education he had, and to know that to push himself along in the world he needed a great deal more general information. Whatever spare hours he had were, therefore, spent in the Museum, which he often declared were some of the most delightful and profitable hours of his life.

Added to all this strenuous work, it must be remembered that he was going through that peculiar stage of development in the life of every normal boy and girl: he was falling in love — with all the earnestness of a very ardent and impressionable nature.

Of course with Dickens, who, from his earliest toddling days, had always some special and adored sweetheart, this development was not so noticeable to those with whom he came in daily contact. But just as *David* found his *Dora,* so Charles Dickens had *his* divinity, and, strange to say, the unknown fair one — unknown, that is, at least to

history — was in many respects the original of the little fairy who captivated *David,* while *Jip,* the dog, was the faithful portrait of a certain stuffed *Jip* which he saw at the home of his former love many years later, when the faded romance made them both smile.

But in those early days the romance was aflame with vigorous and healthy color. Whatever was best and noblest and truest in this boy of seventeen, came to the front and urged him to his highest effort. As *David* worked for his *Dora,* so *he* worked for *his* love. It may have been a mistaken passion — it certainly was not a lasting one — what boy of seventeen quite knows his own mind and heart! But while it lasted it was sincere, and it spurred him as the knights of old were spurred to their very best endeavors. Had it not been for this passing fancy of his, an ideal something for which to strive, he probably would have remained a little lawyer's clerk instead of becoming one of the best shorthand writers and reporters in England.

For four years of his life — four important, useful years — this fancy held him, quite long enough to implant within him a very permanent and enduring desire to succeed, to make his mark in the world; quite long enough to carry him over every difficulty which lay in the path he had chosen.

We must not laugh at these early fancies of boys and girls. They may mean nothing in later years,

but they are none the less real when they happen in one's youth, and love peeps, as it were, through a crack in the door.

In later years Dickens told how he once found himself in a church with his "Angelica," as he called her. He remarked to her, in impassioned, high-flown language, that their union should take place at that Altar and no other, adding in his whimsical way, that it certainly never *did* take place at any other.

In writing about birthdays — his own birthday especially — he says:

"I gave a party on the occasion. She was there. It is unnecessary to name Her more particularly. She was older than I, and had pervaded every chink and crevice of my mind for three or four years. I had held volumes of Imaginary Conversations with Her mother on the subject of our union, and I had written letters more in number than Horace Walpole's, to that discreet woman, soliciting her daughter's hand in marriage. I had never the remotest intention of sending these letters; but to write them, and after a few days tear them up, had been a sublime occupation."

In the story, *David Copperfield* passed through this transition stage long before he met his *Dora*.

"Who is this that breaks upon me?" he asks.

"This is Miss Shepherd whom I love. [*David* must have been twelve at that time.] Miss Shepherd is a boarder at the Misses Nettingalls'

establishment. I adore Miss Shepherd, she is a little girl in a spencer, with a round face and curly flaxen hair. The Misses Nettingalls' young ladies come to the Cathedral. . . . I cannot look upon my book for I must look upon Miss Shepherd. When the Choristers chaunt, I hear Miss Shepherd. In the service I mentally insert Miss Shepherd's name — I put her in among the Royal Family. At home in my own room, I am sometimes moved to cry out 'Oh, Miss Shepherd!' in a transport of love.

"For sometime I am doubtful of Miss Shepherd's feelings, but at length, Fate being propitious, we meet at the dancing-school. I have Miss Shepherd for my partner. I touch Miss Shepherd's glove, and feel a thrill go up the right arm of my jacket and come out at my hair. I say nothing tender to Miss Shepherd, but we understand each other. Miss Shepherd and myself live but to be united."

After this passion had cooled down, there was the eldest *Miss Larkins*. *David* was older then — quite seventeen — quite as old, indeed, as Charles Dickens when he began to study shorthand. *Miss Larkins* was thirty, but what matter! *David* adored her. Love knows no age, and so he was deliriously happy in the mere delight of loving.

Ah, well! The Charles Dickens at thirty-eight, who wrote the history of *David Copperfield,* could afford a sly laugh at that other Charles Dickens

and his youthful loves, but these innocent boyish heart fancies did no harm.

In November, 1828, Dickens left Ellis and Blackmore's office, and forever turned his back upon the law as a profession. He was growing daily more proficient with his shorthand, and the first employment he secured was that of a reporter in the Lord Chancellor's Court, taking notes of the cases. After that he went from court to court, even reporting police cases, and after nearly two years of hard work and active service, he at length reached his goal, and was appointed to a seat in the gallery as parliamentary reporter, shortly before he was nineteen.

Dickens was not always accurate in counting the flight of time. So much was crowded into his life that he might be excused for the discrepancy of a year or more. He says: "I went into the gallery of the House of Commons as a parliamentary reporter when I was a boy not eighteen," but this could not have been the case, for close calculations show that he was nineteen, and many proofs bear out this statement. At any rate, he was not to stay long in the gallery without making his mark. He found himself among a lot of ambitious young fellows, of a different type from the class into which his poverty had heretofore thrown him, and he was quick to see and feel this difference. He began this interesting part of his career as reporter for *The True Sun,* and connected

with this paper was John Forster, who was to be his life-long friend, and later his biographer.

Two beings more unlike in general appearance could not be conceived. Charles Dickens was slim and well-proportioned, with a finely-shaped head atop his graceful body, a head where the hair grew luxuriantly, and, worn a trifle long, was brushed back carelessly from an intellectual breadth of forehead. John Forster, on the contrary, was of robust, thick-set build, something like the renowned Dr. Johnson, who lived and flourished in the days of Addison and Swift. Like Dr. Johnson, he was loud and assertive. He loved to talk, to lead in conversation, and always expressed himself well and fluently; but he was clamorous in an argument, and swept everything before him in a volume of sound.

At the time when he and Dickens found themselves fellow reporters in the parliamentary gallery, he was simply a rollicking, good-natured young man, with his mark to make in the world — just like the slim boy who attracted him so much; and his critical mind soon discovered that even reporting, fascinating though it might be, was not, indeed, the final goal of his new friend.

The love between these two was very sincere; no changes in the lives of either ever interrupted their pleasant intercourse, and, though both entered the literary field, it was through different gateways, and they never came into collision.

John Forster was, first and last, a critic, and Dickens, first and foremost, a writer of novels; the former a great help to the latter, always ready with suggestions and criticism, and between these two, the plots and characters were discussed as seriously as though they were real individuals and real circumstances of life. But just at present, Charles Dickens, having finished the study of law, had taken up the broader field of English politics, and was laughing in his sleeve, as Charles Dickens often did, at the pompous representatives of the government, at the same time proving of enormous value as a reporter.

In the course of his service, he came in contact with the best known political leaders of his day, such men as Brougham, Lord Stanley, Peel, Grey, Hume, and many others known to fame. Yet the reporter of nearly a century back had a pretty hard time of it, all things considered. In a speech delivered in 1865, at the second annual dinner of the Newspaper Press Fund, he tells of some of his difficulties:

"I have pursued the calling of a reporter under circumstances of which many of my brethren, at home in England here . . . can form no adequate conception. I have often transcribed for the printer, from my shorthand notes, important public speeches in which the strictest accuracy was required . . . writing on the palm of my hand, by the light of a dark lantern, in a post-

chaise and four, galloping through a wild country and through the dead of the night at the then surprising rate of fifteen miles an hour. The very last time I was at Exeter, I strolled into the castle yard, there to identify — for the amusement of a friend — the spot on which I once 'took,' as we used to call it, an election speech of my noble friend, Lord Russell, in the midst of a lively fight maintained by all the vagabonds in that division of the country, and under such a pelting rain that I remember two good-natured colleagues, who chanced to be at leisure, held a pocket-handkerchief over my note-book, after the manner of a state canopy in an ecclesiastical procession. I have worn my knees by writing on them on the old back row of the old gallery of the old House of Commons; and I have worn my feet by standing to write in a preposterous pen in the old House of Lords, where we used to be huddled together like so many sheep. . . . Returning home from excited political meetings in the country, to the waiting press in London, I do verily believe I have been upset in almost every description of vehicle known in this country. I have been belated on miry by-roads towards the small hours, forty or fifty miles from London, in a wheelless carriage, with exhausted horses and drunken postboys, and have got back in time for publication. . . . I have never forgotten the fascination of that old pursuit. The pleasure that I used to feel in the

rapidity and dexterity of its exercise, has never faded out of my breast. Whatever little cunning of hand or head I took to it or acquired in it, I have so retained as that I fully believe I could resume it to-morrow, very little the worse from long disuse. To this present year of my life, when I sit in this hall or where not, hearing a dull speech — the phenomenon *does* occur — I sometimes beguile the tedium of the moment, by mentally following the speaker in the old way; and sometimes, if you can believe me, I find my hand going on the table-cloth, taking an imaginary note of it all."

Indeed, the old calling of his youth was never quite thrown aside, and it is remarkable that twenty years after he left the gallery he taught the art of shorthand thoroughly and completely to Henry Austin, his young brother-in-law, who was entering the career of journalism.

Dickens left *The True Sun* for a finer position on *The Mirror of Parliament,* edited by his mother's brother, John Henry Barrow, and it was while he was reporter for his uncle's paper that he wrote, for a private performance in his own family, a sort of burlesque of "Othello."

Of so little moment or account did his writing seem in his family circle, or even among his friends, that this special bit passed quite unnoticed. It was called "O'Thello (Part of the Great Unpaid)," and would not have been remembered at all, had not

one sheet of the original manuscript, in his own writing, been accidentally saved from destruction. This is the very earliest of Dickens's writings, but even the novelist himself had no recollection of it. It was presented by John Dickens to a friend, with this note at the top:

"This page is from an unpublished Travestie written by Mr. Charles Dickens for private performance in his own family (1833) and is in his own handwriting. The 'Great Unpaid' was your humble servant, John Dickens, Alphingham, 6 June, 1842."

The only regret of the friend was that he did not take the whole manuscript, which was doubtless destroyed along with other valuable mementos.

From the moment Charles put his active young shoulders to the wheel, the family fortunes began to mend. They were a restless family still, moving from house to house, but always to a better house, in a better street. They had weathered the very heaviest storms of adversity, and never again did poverty look in at their windows, although it had left its mark upon the very soul of the young fellow who was beginning, slowly but surely, to rise above his surroundings.

In 1834, at the age of twenty-two, he found himself upon the staff of the *Morning Chronicle,* one of the leading London papers, a formidable rival of the *Times.* He had won great distinction

as a reporter, he loved his work, but in that active mind of his there was a something pulling him in another direction, and pulling with such force that he could not but obey its call. And so, instead of becoming the greatest newspaper man in the country, he abruptly left the field, and opened his inkstand, which he was destined never to close during the rest of his life.

PART II.

THE YOUNG MAN.

CHAPTER V.

THE FIRST SPARKS OF GENIUS.

SHORTLY before the close of Dickens's career as a reporter, some time in 1833, he wrote, as he tells us, "a little something in secret," sent it to a magazine, and to his amazement, it appeared in December 1833, in the *Monthly Magazine* "in all the glory of print."

To picture his excitement over this unexpected event would be impossible. He had carried his manuscript stealthily in the dusk of the evening, and had dropped it with trembling fingers into "a dark letter-box, in a dark office, in a dark court in Fleet Street — the office of the *Monthly Magazine.*" The magazine went out of existence long ago, but the doorway and letter-box through which the manuscript was dropped are in the possession of an ardent Dickens collector.

The "little something" was a humorous sketch called "A Dinner at Poplar Walk"— better known to-day as "Mr. Minns and his Cousin"— and we of the present generation cannot help wondering what mysterious quality the tale possessed which had the power of pushing its unknown author

to the very threshold of fame. Most modern readers would call it nothing but a silly farce — which, indeed, it is — but, written in the days when the middle-class English folk were inclined to be a trifle snobbish, the little sketch was full of living pictures that caught the eye of the waiting editor. The wiles of a scheming family to get into the good graces of a rich relation was a picture that the great writers of that time were fond of painting, and the fact that this unknown author drew his portraits with many broad strokes closely akin to caricature was probably the chief attraction.

Let us see what this young fellow of twenty-one does with his middle-aged hero:

"Mr. Augustus Minns was a bachelor, of about forty as he said — of about eight-and-forty as his friends said. He was always exceedingly clean, precise and tidy — perhaps somewhat priggish, and the most retiring man in the world. . . . He occupied a first floor in Tavistock Street, Covent Garden, where he had resided for twenty years, having been in the habit of quarreling with his landlord the whole time; regularly giving notice of his intention to quit on the first day of every quarter, and as regularly countermanding it on the second. There were two classes of created objects which he held in the deepest and most unmingled horror; these were dogs and children. He was not unamiable, but he could have viewed the execution of a dog, or the assassi-

nation of an infant with the liveliest satisfaction. Their habits were at variance with his love of order; and his love of order was as powerful as his love of life."

Such was Mr. Minns; and the rather unruly adventures of that staid gentleman formed the pivot of the tale. The far-seeing editor detected a new current running through an old theme, and the bare fact of its acceptance gave the young writer heart and courage to try again and again.

There were nine "Sketches" in all that he contributed to the same magazine, the last appearing in February, 1835. Most of them were unsigned until August, 1834, when the pen-name of "Boz" made its first bow to the public, signed to a burlesque sketch, called "The Boarding House," chiefly remarkable for the many characters, each one a distinct and living person, to be found within the limits of so short a story. Each one of these nine "Sketches" was a clever hit at some special little human weakness, as illustrated by his central character. He was particularly hard on old bachelors — this boy of twenty-two — ascribing to them the most ferocious characteristics, especially emphasizing their hatred of babies and small children in general; old maids he laughed at in his genial way; and scheming Mammas, pert young ladies, cockney clerks, grasping landladies, and meek husbands figured in his tales, all so vividly colored that we seem to have met them before.

This connection with the *Monthly Magazine* lasted from December, 1833, to February, 1835, and then, as the magazine could no longer hold itself together, Dickens had to look about for some place where his work would sell, for hitherto his contributions had been entirely complimentary.

It chanced at this time that the *Morning Chronicle,* for which Dickens was reporting, was about to issue an evening edition called the *Evening Chronicle,* with Mr. George Hogarth as editor-in-chief. Dickens knew Hr. Hogarth and his family quite well, a delightful family as the young man soon found out, for he grew to be quite intimate with the three charming daughters, Catharine, Mary and Georgina — so intimate, in fact, that a delicious little romance took root and flourished, between him and the eldest daughter, Catharine — but this was later. At present Mr. Hogarth was chiefly concerned in procuring a contribution from Dickens for the first number of the new enterprise.

Dickens for many reasons was anxious to oblige his friend, but he wrote to him first, saying frankly that he should like to be paid at least some trifling sum for each sketch, over and above the salary he received as a reporter. His request was considered reasonable, and as a consequence he received seven, instead of five guineas a week, with the stipulation that he should do a series of articles in

the style of the "Sketches" which he had done for the *Monthly Magazine*.

Now if there was one thing he knew more about than people, it was London, and so he gave to his waiting readers his "Sketches of London," full of the life of the streets he loved. The first of these sketches was "Hackney-coach Stands," written at a time when the hackney-coach was giving place to the cheaper and more popular omnibus — a plea for the old-time splendor of the hackney-coach, and a sigh that it should descend at last to waiting at a stand for possible customers.

"Talk of cabs!" he exclaims in conclusion. "Cabs are all very well in cases of expedition when it's a matter of neck or nothing, life or death, your temporary home or your long one. But beside a cab's lacking that gravity of deportment which so peculiarly distinguishes a hackney-coach, let it never be forgotten that a cab is a thing of yesterday, and that he never was anything better. A hackney-cab has always been a hackney-cab from his first entry into public life; whereas a hackney-coach is a remnant of past gentility, a victim of fashion, a hanger-on of an old English family, wearing their arms, and in days of yore escorted by men wearing their livery, stripped of his finery, and thrown upon the world like a once-smart footman, when he is no longer sufficiently juvenile for his office, progressing lower and lower

in the scale of four-wheeled degradation, until at last it comes to — a stand!"

In this series are his Sketches of London Streets in the morning and at night — both very effective and vivid pictures.

Dickens's morning in the London streets begins with the first peep of dawn, and we follow his guiding finger until "the sun darts his bright rays cheerfully down the still half empty street." We cannot help smiling when with him we encounter "small office lads in large hats, who are made men before they are boys, hurrying along in pairs, with their first coat carefully brushed, and the white trousers of last Sunday plentifully besmeared with dust and ink"— for we know he had in mind a certain small boy who trudged these same streets in the early morning.

Night in London, he paints even more attractively; his description of the muffin-boy is enough to produce a yearning for muffins beyond all expression:

"In the suburbs, the muffin-boy rings his way down the street much more slowly than he is wont to do; for Mrs. Macklin of No. 4 has no sooner opened her little street-door, and screamed out 'Muffins!' with all her might, than Mrs. Walker of No. 5 puts her head out of the parlor window and screams 'Muffins!' too; and Mrs. Walker has scarcely got the words out of her lips, than Mrs. Peplow, over the way, lets loose Master Peplow,

who darts down the street with a velocity which nothing but buttered muffins in perspective could possibly inspire, and drags the boy back by main force, whereupon Mrs. Macklin and Mrs. Walker, just to save the boy trouble, and to say a few neighborly words to Mrs. Peplow at the same time, run over the way and buy their muffins at Mrs. Peplow's door . . ." and whoever reads this stirring description has a longing for buttered muffins, which only buttered muffins can satisfy.

These little touches give us the key to Dickens's wonderful powers. At will, he could set a feast before us and make us smack our lips; he could make us laugh one moment and cry the next; he touched the sensitive strings of the human heart from the very beginning — with the hand of a master, and, though his pictures were often crude and glaringly colored, the men, women, and children he put upon his canvas *really* lived and breathed; the world he wrote about was a *real* world; and the things that happened were not improbabilities, but what we are sure must have really happened in the course of the story.

The "Sketches by Boz," rough as they are, bubble and sparkle with real life. Any contemporary of young Charles Dickens could have threaded the network of London streets and seen just the things so vividly portrayed in these "Sketches." Dickens himself says of them in his preface:

"The whole of these Sketches were written and

published one by one, when I was a very young man. They were collected and re-published while I was still a very young man; and sent into the world with all their imperfections (a good many) on their heads.

"They comprise my first attempts at authorship, with the exception of certain tragedies achieved at the mature age of eight or ten, and represented with great applause to overflowing nurseries. I am conscious of their often being extremely crude and ill-considered, and bearing obvious marks of haste and inexperience . . ."

This was quite true, but at the same time they were sincere efforts in a new and untried field, and were beginning to bring their writer — if not fame — at least a certain amount of public notice, to say nothing of a substantial addition to his income.

As early as 1833, while still on the staff of the *Morning Chronicle,* he decided to start a home of his own. Knowing how fond he was of his family, we cannot help wondering why, for his father had come up in the world and was living in some degree of ease and comfort in Bentinck Street. But we must not forget that the family was a large one and by no means a quiet one; that his writing required uninterrupted privacy; and, last but not least, he did not wish his growing intimacy with the Hogarths to be the subject of family discussion, for at that particular time it is

fairly certain that he was in love with all the young ladies, finding it, indeed, a difficult matter to make a choice, for they were all charming.

The first apartments of this young bachelor were in Cecil Street (Strand), but the cooking was horrible, the attention to his very modest needs was of the slightest, and so he moved to Buckingham Street, into rooms on the top floor, the same probably which *David Copperfield* described as being "on the top floor of the house . . . and consisted of a little half-blind entry — where you could see hardly anything, a little stone-blind pantry where you could see nothing at all, a sitting-room and a bedroom. The furniture was rather faded, but quite good enough for me; and sure enough the river was outside the windows."

In 1834 he moved to chambers in Furnivals' Inn, Holborn, where his first rooms consisted of a "three-pair-back" at No. 13, and here many of the later "Sketches" were written. But finally he moved into No. 15, renting a "three-pair-floor-south," which was a vast improvement on No. 13, for the rooms were large and airy, and there were plenty of bachelor comforts all around him.

"There is little enough to see in Furnivals' Inn," he tells us in "Martin Chuzzlewit." "It is a shady, quiet place, echoing to the footsteps of those who have business there, and rather monotonous and gloomy on Sunday Evenings."

Just at this time life was changing for him

at every point; he became engaged to Miss Catharine Thomson Hogarth, the eldest daughter of George Hogarth, and during the happy days of courtship plans were afoot for him to write a series of humorous articles suggested by a series of sketches by Seymour, the well-known artist.

The firm of Chapman & Hall, who approached the young author on the subject, was just established, and as early as November, 1835, had published a little book illustrated by Seymour, called the "Squib Annual." The artist suggested another book, preferably one of sporting life, and Dickens was asked what he could do in that line. The result was the origin of the *Pickwick Club,* and the creation of the immortal *Mr. Pickwick.* These Sketches were to form part of a continued tale, given to the public in monthly installments, and John Forster, his friend and biographer, remarks upon certain coincident dates; the first number of "Pickwick" appeared in April, 1836, and on April 2, of the same year, he and Miss Hogarth were married very quietly.

This date, strangely enough, was his friend's birthday, and always after that the event was celebrated most appropriately — John Forster usually making a third at their little anniversary dinner. And another thing, equally strange, was the origin of the goggle-eyed, round-faced, adorable *Mr. Pickwick.* As he was to be illustrated, there were naturally many suggestions as to his

face and figure. Seymour's idea was a long, thin man, but this was not Dickens's own conception, and certainly did not fit in with his description of the dear, placid, childlike old hero. Finally, after much fruitless discussion, Mr. Chapman himself came to the rescue and suggested a friend of his, who lived at Richmond, a fat, good-humored old fellow who *would* persist in wearing drab tights and black gaiters, and who — strange to say — bore the name of John Foster. Dickens noticed that the two names (that of his friend, John Forster, being the second) were not spelled alike, but he was a person who always enjoyed the odd happenings in life, and the fact that there was another John Foster in the world seemed to tickle his fancy and stir his imagination. Seymour produced an excellent portrait from Mr. Chapman's description, and though he died when but twenty-four pages of the book were published, the rotund, placid *Mr. Pickwick* held his own through all successive numbers.

With the first issue of "Pickwick," Dickens at the age of twenty-four brought his young bride home to Furnivals' Inn, where they were very cozy and happy for a blissful year. It was an unpretentious little wedding, with a quiet family breakfast after the ceremony, and a brief honeymoon in the little village of Chalk, about five miles from Rochester and two from Gravesend, with Chatham not far off; and somewhere within driving or walking distance loomed the old Gad's Hill. It was

but natural that the young fellow should wish to show his wife the haunts of his little boyhood, to talk to her of his childish dreams and aspirations, and to point laughingly to Gad's Hill, saying: "There is my goal — that red brick mansion on the summit will one day be my Castle, my pen is the key which will open all the doors that bar the way." And the two happy young things built their air-castles as the boy had built his long, long ago, only the man now held the key in his hand, while the little boy had stood with his hands in his empty pockets, and had just looked and looked. — and longed with all his lonely little heart.

Then back to Furnivals' Inn they went, and Dickens started on the second number of "Pickwick," with Seymour still as illustrator, but his sudden and tragic death shortly after made the publishers cast about for a new artist. Robert W. Buss, whom they secured, proved most unsatisfactory; his etchings were beautiful, but the text needed broader lines of humor, and so, after one or two efforts, they gave him up. There were many applicants for the vacant post, among them William Makepeace Thackeray, whose drawings Dickens did not consider suitable, and John Leech, too, was turned down; but at length an artist was found in the person of Hablot K. Browne, and from that time forward he seemed the person best calculated to follow the queer turnings and twistings of that most strange and original mind.

The two worked splendidly together. Browne adopted the name of "Phiz" to correspond with the name of "Boz," and the "Pickwick" numbers went steadily on. According to his arrangements with his publishers, Dickens received fourteen pounds and ten shillings each month, as the numbers appeared. This was considered very generous payment, and the first two months were paid in advance as he needed money for his honeymoon.

Strange to say — yet not so strange if one cares to review dear old "Pickwick" from cover to cover — the installments at first did not prove very popular. One's interest in the four members of the Pickwick Club who sallied forth to study conditions was of a mild sort, untempered by enthusiasm, and it was not until Part VI, where *Sam Weller* made his appearance, that the public felt the least throb of interest. The jovial, philosophical, lovable *Samuel* increased the circulation from fifty copies of each number to forty thousand, thus reviving the dying hopes of the publishers, who were nearly ready to give up the scheme. Instead, they fell into such rejoicing that they sent the young writer a check for five hundred pounds, as a mark of appreciation, when the twelfth number was reached; and, by the time the twenty numbers were completed, Chapman and Hall had made fourteen thousand pounds by the sale in numbers only, and to the elated young author they not only paid the stipulated salary, but three thousand

pounds besides, so popular had "Pickwick" become in the interim.

The highly colored background of *Mr. Pickwick's* chatty young servant threw the drab tights and black gaiters of the old gentleman into excellent relief, for the inimitable *Samuel* loved his master, and was continually talking about his good points. "'Bless his old gaiters,' rejoined Sam, looking out at the garden door. 'He's a-keepin' guard in the lane with that ere dark lantern, like a amiable Guy Fawkes! I never see such a fine creetur in all my days. Blessed if I don't think his heart must have been born five-and-twenty years arter his body at least.'"

And *Sam's* devotion to his master was too genuine to hide even beneath the thick crust of ridiculous events which were making that poor gentleman a laughing-stock to friends and foes alike.

"'No man serves him but me, and now we're upon it, I'll let you into another secret besides that,'" said Sam to Job Trotter. "'I never heerd, mind you, nor read of in story-books, nor seen in picters, any angel in tights and gaiters — not even in spectacles, as I remember, though that may ha' been done for anythin' I know to the contrairy — but mark my words, Job Trotter, he's a regular thorough-bred angel for all that, and let me see the man as wentures to tell me he knows a better vun.'"

As number after number of the "Pickwick Pa-

pers" appeared, just so steadily did the public interest increase. Yet what was the secret of its immense popularity it would be hard to explain. There is no story to hold it together, and the adventures of Messrs. *Pickwick, Tupman, Snodgrass* and *Winkle,* certainly fail to reflect much credit on their common-sense. Every person described by Dickens in this immortal work, was drawn upon the very broadest lines of caricature. All the situations are farcical, yet people talked of it all over London, high and low, rich and poor, young people and old, hailed the coming of each number, and one desperately ill person, with scarcely a step between himself and the grave, was heard to exclaim, "Well, thank God, 'Pickwick' will be out in ten days anyway!"

A new note had been struck in the literary world; the young author, pen in hand, looked on in amazement at the sensation he had created. It was so easy for him to write of people and their manners that he did not realize, at first, the hold he had upon his readers, and then suddenly, in the midst of all his good fortune, came his first terrible sorrow.

On January 6, 1837, his eldest son was born, in the old rooms at Furnivals' Inn, and of course there was great rejoicing in the household. But the dear familiar quarters were too cramped for even a very little new baby, so they moved to No. 48, Doughty Street, and with them went Mrs.

Dickens's next younger sister, Mary Hogarth, a lovely girl, of whom Dickens was exceedingly fond. She died very suddenly, after an evening which they had spent pleasantly together at the theater. She breathed her last in his arms, and the shock — no less than the sincere grief — prostrated him for many weeks, during which time his pen lay idle, while the public clamored in vain for the thirteenth installment of "Pickwick," and the serial was interrupted for a whole month to give the young author time to regain his mental balance.

From the first, Dickens had always shown the most romantic affection for all the Hogarth girls, and many believe that in choosing a wife, he was absolutely impartial, as he loved them all alike. For Mary, after his marriage, he had all the affection of a brother, and the memory of her haunted many of his stories. He himself wrote the epitaph on the simple gravestone at Kensalgreen:

"Young, beautiful, and good, God numbered her among his angels at the early age of seventeen."

Many of us know that exquisite poem of Longfellow's called "Resignation," and there is one stanza which fits in peculiarly just here:

> Let us be patient; these severe afflictions
> Not from the ground arise,
> But oftentimes celestial benedictions
> Assume this dark disguise.

This was true in Dickens's case. His love of girls and their ways, and their numberless graces, dates more especially from those days when he knew and loved and mourned for Mary Hogarth. She became to him a symbol of all that was loveliest in girlhood, and out of his grief he built immortal monuments to her memory, in the forms of the girls which flit through his books, girls who delight us at every turn and live in our minds as permanently as *Mr. Pickwick* or even *Sam Weller*.

Hitherto his books had been singularly lacking in a certain charming element which later on was to temper the fun and soften all the too vivid color in his work, but from the time of "Nicholas Nickleby," his next book, we find distinct touches which show how the death of this one young girl wrapped its influence about his whole life. Hitherto girls had played no part in his writing; from now on he studied them with the result that probably no writer of his time knew them half as well, or gave to the world such living portraits.

His pen, we must remember, was a magic wand; all that it touched became real, and as, from now on, we meet the girls who were his children, we know that once they really lived.

This was Mary Hogarth's precious legacy to him, and through her death he became master of many gifts heretofore unnoticed in his work — the gift of pathos more than all. He had seen death, he had felt its pangs, he had sorrowed, and

so he could write of death and sorrow as he had never done before, giving that touch which can draw unexpected tears at unexpected moments.

Many modern writers and critics contend that Dickens lingered too much over these painful scenes, but we must not forget that the people he sent out of the world were real people to him and to those who read his books, and as real people they had to live and die in the most natural way, while they also lived and laughed in quite as natural a fashion.

Dickens put whole sermons into these somber scenes; he never, on any account, in any of his books, stayed away from a funeral; he was always there, to still the grief and say the timely word in his own pathetic way, living over in each instance that never-to-be-forgotten time when Mary Hogarth died.

But, once recovered from the shock, he took up his pen again, and "Pickwick" went on smoothly to the end, while the public smacked its lips over each installment, and the publishers and author raked in a harvest beyond all their dreams.

No hint of sorrow or death marred the lightness of touch which the artist lent to this frolicsome masterpiece. But he still hid behind the pen-name of "Boz," while the world wondered who this "Boz" could be, who could write so vividly of so many people and situations. "Pickwick" became the most popular name in the English lan-

guage, and it was even used by shop-keepers, to advertise their articles, and to-day we come across *The Pickwick Club,* the *Pickwick cigar,* the *Pickwick pen,* and many other things as odd in their way as the delightful old gentleman in the drab tights and black gaiters.

Thackeray considered "Pickwick" a great contemporary history of the English people, and certain it is that it placed the young author, at twenty-four, high on the ladder of fame. Thackeray was thirty-six when he achieved his first success in "Vanity Fair"; George Eliot was forty when she wrote "Adam Bede"; and Scott was at least forty-three when "Waverley" appeared, the first of the famous Waverley novels.

It was a dizzy height to reach all of a sudden, but Charles Dickens was too sure-footed to fall; his keen, alert eyes were looking deep into the heart of the world; and his pen was poised to write of what he found there.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FIRST NOVELS AND WHAT CAME OF THEM.

HE brilliant young author — now fairly launched upon his career with no thought nor care for the morrow — could look ahead and plan how best to do his work. While still engaged upon "Pickwick," orders and demands poured in upon him and his pen was never at rest. The people — especially the London people — being always in his mind, even in those early days, he wrote a little article in their behalf, entitled "Sunday under Three Heads." The House of Commons had passed some very rigid laws about the observance of the Sabbath, and Dickens's paper was a plea for the poor and the little excursions and simple pleasures which they could only enjoy of a Sunday. This did not bear his own signature — he signed himself "Timothy Sparks" — but it was forcible enough to make some impression, for the Museums and picture galleries were thereafter kept open on Sundays.

At this time, too (1836), he wrote a small farce called "The Strange Gentleman," which was produced, with fair success, in the new St. James's

Theater. Even before this he had combined with John Hullah, a young musical composer of his own age, and set to his music a little piece which he called "The Village Coquette," and it was played in London and in Edinburgh. Dickens never took much credit for this work, it was plainly written to fit in with the music. Another farce called "Is She His Wife? or, Something Singular!" was also reeled off at this period, and there is yet a fourth, called "The Lamplighter," which was written for Macready, but which never saw the light. Later Dickens turned it into "The Lamplighter's Story," which was published with other stories and essays under the title of "The Pic Nic Papers," and with his well-known generosity Dickens gave the proceeds to the destitute family of Macrone, one of his early publishers.

When "Pickwick" had reached its tenth number, Dickens agreed with another publisher, Richard Bentley, to edit a new monthly magazine to be called *Bentley's Miscellany* and to contribute a serial story. Accordingly, in the second number he presented the opening chapter of "Oliver Twist," by many conceded to be the most powerful and dramatic of all his stories. It was begun in February and finished in September, 1838.

We cannot help wondering at the enormous energy of this young man. His mind worked like a steam-engine; he carried at one time not only "Pickwick" and "Oliver Twist," but in April,

1838, "Pickwick" being concluded, the first number of "Nicholas Nickleby" took its place, and Dickens, fresh from the dramatic interest of one story, could plunge into the pathos of the other without the confusion of style or the mixing of plots. Added to all this, were constant contributions to *Bentley's Miscellany* on various subjects, the first being "Public Life of Mr. Tulrumble, once Mayor of Mudfog," the beginning of a series called "The Mudfog Papers." The Mudfog Association was founded for the "Advancement of Everything." This gave the young editor great scope for a laugh and a slap at many time-honored public institutions, and he certainly hit hard and laughed merrily — it was his way.

Anonymous writing was very much the rage in Dickens's day, and in 1839 a little book was published by Chapman, Hall & Co., called "Sketches of Young Ladies." It was a handful of rude and satirical essays on the peculiarities and weaknesses of Young Ladies, and was signed "Quiz." Dickens at once came to their defense, and, under the same pen-name, attacked "Young Gentlemen" in a series of Sketches written in the same style; later on he wrote "Sketches of Young Couples," and these were all collected in book form, and were daintily illustrated by "Phiz" (Hablot K. Browne); but Dickens himself calls this collection "a poor thing of little worth," and apart from the illustrations and a certain broad humor, we can

detect nothing of greatness in these commonplace little essays.

He was also engaged at this time in editing the "Memoirs of Joseph Grimaldi," the famous clown, who was one of the earliest recollections of his childhood. Any ordinary man would have staggered under the weight of work such as Dickens carried, but not so this active young enthusiast. The more he had to do, the more he enjoyed himself, and he juggled first with one thing and then with another, in the most amazing manner. His brain was seething with a thousand fancies — his heart was beating with a thousand hopes. He was eager — not only to show the world what he could do, but to do something for that world which he loved — the world which had been kind to the small boy, thrown into the heart of it.

In the writing of "Oliver Twist" there is no doubt that here again Dickens had himself in mind, in drawing the delicate, shrinking character of this boy from the workhouse. If loneliness, and weariness, and uncongenial companions were signs of resemblance, then *Oliver Twist* bore a strong likeness to Charles Dickens, who trudged daily to and from the blacking-warehouse. But the boy in the book stands forth almost alone from the gruesome shadows of the story. We must not forget, however, that before the third number appeared the author had been sorely tried, by his first real grief, for the shadow of it certainly haunts the

book, and while it may be acknowledged as the first novel of Charles Dickens, it is decidedly not the book to be recommended as a first reading of Dickens to anyone young enough to have that fair open field of good reading from which to pick and choose.

The young man, in writing his first novel, dived into some of the darkest haunts of the London he knew so well, and it is also well-known that every scene which has a locality for a background gains truth and vividness in the course of any story, a fact which only enhances the gloominess and horror of this one. Yet it accomplished one lasting good — it awoke the honest people of London to the knowledge that in their midst, perhaps within touch, were schools of training for the professional thief. It opened the eyes of the City guardians and made them doubly watchful, for this eager reformer had painted such a true and ghastly picture that the very streets where such things happened rose specter-like out of the night's obscurity, and the slim young fellow, with his earnest, handsome face and keen alert eyes, was fast becoming that rarest of all birds — a prophet in his own country.

It seems strange that he should have written such a tale at a time when for him life was full of rosy promises. He was happily married, with a bouncing boy to enliven the house, and fast winning for himself a name and reputation. Yet per-

haps it was this very contrast between his own circumstances and those of the people who lived in the dark haunts which gave him pause and armed his pen.

He could not forget, with all the sordid memories of his boyhood fresh in his mind, that he, too, had been of the people who worked in the darkness, and it was this fact, that he was one of them, which made him so great a power. He never tried to push himself out of the Middle Class to which he belonged from first to last. He was proud of it, and, although the portals of the great world swung wide for him, and he entered the gardens and plucked the flowers, he always went back to the people, and they pressed about him and gave him the wealth of their love and reverence.

"Oliver Twist," written, then, from the depths of a strong moral purpose, also stands apart as the author's first attempt at a regular novel — his first attempt, too, to trace the simple history of a sweet and lovely girl, his first tribute to the memory of the dead girl he had loved so well. In the character of *Rose Maylie,* he has given us a pen picture of Mary Hogarth.

"The younger lady was in the lovely bloom and springtime of womanhood, at the age when, if ever angels be for God's purpose enthroned in mortal forms, they may be, without impiety, supposed to abide in such as hers. She was not past seventeen, cast in so slight and exquisite a mold,

so mild and gentle, so pure and beautiful that earth seemed not her element, nor its rough creatures her fit companions."

Sweet *Rose Maylie!* The memory of her is a beautiful, tender picture drawn from life. There is another girl in the book, but she haunts the darkness where she has been thrust — a crimson flower with the bloom all brushed away. Had she been given a chance with light and air, who knows what poor *Nancy* might have become, and therein lay the wonderful gift of Charles Dickens. He took these two girls, both young and handsome, and placed almost a world between them. For *Rose,* the sun shone, the birds sang, the flowers bloomed in quiet, old-fashioned garden spots, where to be good seemed to be a natural thing. For *Nancy,* there was darkness always; the sun at best but shivered through a cloud, and the light of a sputtering candle threw grotesque shadows round her dingy haunts; there was the smell of evil in the air, and the odor clung to her garments. Poor child! the thick fog hid the garden spots, and perhaps she never saw a flower. Yet she saw *Rose,* a sweet, pitiful, sorrowful *Rose;* from the two ends of the earth, Dickens brought the two girls face to face; they clasped hands across the gulf, they were "sisters under their skin," as Rudyard Kipling says, then *Rose* went back to light and life, and *Nancy* to darkness and death.

There is where Dickens triumphs — he does not

give us a " sensation," he makes us " feel," and out of all the horror of " Oliver Twist " we can remember the meeting of these two girls, and the fair promise of what might have been had they met again.

Charles Dickens might have had for his motto, " To right the wrong," so earnestly did his efforts tend towards that good purpose. From the first moment that " Nicholas Nickleby " took shape in his brain, the little blighted Yorkshire schoolboy rose in his mind. Before writing a line of this story, he determined to see for himself one or more of these Yorkshire schools, to study the schoolmasters, whose notorious cruelty was even then whispered abroad. They were veritable Turks and Tartars — these schoolmasters. Dickens had some suspicion of their existence, from his recollections of Wellington House Academy, but he was soon to learn that Mr. Jones — the head of that school — was a prince of courtliness and gentleness compared with the ogres of Yorkshire and its neighborhood, who watched over and regulated the very heart-beats of the shivering little mortals committed to their care.

It was by this time an open secret that the " inimitable Boz," as his admirers called him, was none other than Charles Dickens, but *Boz* was always a favorite nickname among his friends, and he himself was very partial to it.

When " Pickwick " had reached its seventeenth

number, the publishers announced that they had "completed arrangements with Mr. Dickens for the production of an entirely new novel to be published monthly, at the same price and in the same form as the 'Pickwick Papers.'"

This was "Nicholas Nickleby," begun on his birthday (February 7), 1838, after some struggle, for a "new story" was always a serious undertaking, and was always approached with some hesitation and many misgivings. He was fresh for the task; he had taken a pleasant holiday trip into Flanders, with his wife and Hablot K. Browne, later he passed a short while at Broadstairs, his favorite seaside town, and he returned to London ready to storm it with "Nicholas Nickleby."

His first step in the new book was his trip into Yorkshire accompanied by Hablot K. Browne, who was to illustrate the story. His object was to see the schools in session and the schoolmasters at their very worst. Education was greatly neglected in England at that time; anyone was free, without preparation or examination, to become a schoolmaster, and the man who was generally unfit for anything else was at liberty to open a school anywhere. This state of affairs produced the most illiterate, incapable set of schoolmasters, and Dickens tells us in the preface to his book that "these Yorkshire schoolmasters were the lowest and most rotten round in the whole ladder."

The two young men reached Yorkshire in the

dead of winter, in the midst of a heavy snow-storm. They were anxious to conceal their identity as they heard that even the worst of schoolmasters were rather shy with strangers. However, Dickens was armed with some letters of introduction from a friend in London to his Yorkshire connections, and the plan was to consult them in reference to a supposed little boy "who had been left with a widowed mother, who didn't know what to do with him; the poor lady had thought . . . of sending him to a Yorkshire school; I was the poor lady's friend traveling that way, and if the recipient of the letter could inform me of a school in his neighborhood, the writer would be very much obliged."

This little "cooked up" story was the screen behind which Dickens hid as he traveled over the Yorkshire country, and the recipient of one letter was a jovial, ruddy, broad-faced man, "who spoke the true Yorkshire English," just as *John Browdie* did in "Nicholas Nickleby." In speaking of him, Dickens says in his preface:

"I went to several places in that part of the country where I understood these schools to be most plentifully sprinkled, and had no occasion to deliver a letter until I came to a certain town which shall be nameless. The person to whom it was addressed was not at home; but he came down at night through the snow, to the inn where I was staying. It was after dinner, and he needed little

persuasion to sit down by the fire in a warm corner, and take his share of the wine that was on the table."

They talked on many subjects round the cheerful fire, but whenever a school was mentioned, the guest fell silent or answered in monosyllables. Over and over Dickens tried to draw him out upon the subject; each time he sheered off, until at length, on leaving, he broke out in his strong Yorkshire dialect, strongly advising the "widow lady" not to send her little boy to a Yorkshire schoolmaster while there was a horse to hold in the London streets, or a gutter to sleep in.

This was just the testimony that Dickens needed to present his case; he saw the schools soon after; *then* he wrote his story, a plea for the "hundreds of thousands of minds that have been deformed forever by the incapable pettifoggers who have pretended to form them!"

This great evil of the cheap school was of course the root of "Nicholas Nickleby," and the young author was gratified to see how, during the progress of the story, this awful blot upon England's humanity had impressed the reading public. But the book holds much more besides. It is built upon a plot — all of Dickens's novels are — and holds the interest straight through, from the time we meet the simple, unworldly *Mrs. Nickleby* and her two fine young children — the high-spirited *Nicholas* and his pretty sister *Kate* — until the wedding

bells at the very end, where everybody gets married, just as they always did in the good old comedies.

By all means we must take "Nicholas Nickleby" as our first reading of Dickens. To begin with, there is youth in it. Everybody is young, except the old world-worn villains who are never young, no matter what their age. *Nicholas* is young and a fighter — we are glad his shoulders are broad and his arm strong, and that he has a fearless tongue, which he knows when and how to use, especially in *Dotheboys Hall,* when he entered the amiable family of *Squeers.*

All readers of Dickens know that he was fond of producing what in literature are known as "types," but that is the wrong start to take in reading Dickens's books. Enjoy them first; there is always a wholesome story, and if accidentally we come across photographs of people we know, why, so much the more will be our enjoyment. A second reading will probably show us something new — something which we never noticed before, and by the time we reach a third reading, we may be as intimate with all the characters as Dickens was himself when he popped them in between the covers, and still leave something to be discovered if we care to read them a fourth time.

Who ever heard of a school called *Dotheboys Hall!* Yet we see how aptly the name was chosen (Do the boys), for the poor little fellows were

certainly "done up" and "done for" under the hospitable roof of Mr. Squeers.

Three people in this book were drawn from the heart of Dickens's own family. *Mrs. Nickleby* was a sort of caricature of his mother. *Kate Nickleby* was a tribute to his favorite sister, Fanny, and *Nicholas* himself was supposed to possess the outward form of Henry Burnett, Fanny's husband, though it is also more than probable that *Nicholas,* as we find him in the story, from nineteen to twenty-five, was in some manner his own biographical sketch at that period, for he had many of the same aspirations and ambitions.

As to his mother's likeness to *Mrs. Nickleby,* it must have been, as Mr. Percy Fitzgerald tells us, "simply the exaggeration of some slight peculiarities," for while Mrs. Dickens was considered by all her friends to possess her fair share of common-sense, with plenty of wit and a keen sense of humor, poor *Mrs. Nickleby* did not enjoy that distinction. But Dickens admits the resemblance, for he tells us:

"Mrs. Nickleby herself, sitting bodily before me in a solid chair, once asked me if I really believed there was such a woman!"

This was rather hard on a really sensible woman like Mrs. Dickens, for *Mrs. Nickleby* is generally conceded to be one of the biggest fools in fiction. He has given us, too, in this most interesting book,

some specimens of typical English girls, which are as varied as they are delightful.

To begin at the beginning, there is *Kate* herself, only seventeen when we meet her first, a charming, beautiful, spirited girl, at an age which to Dickens was always beautiful, because Mary Hogarth had lived those years and had died in their fullness, and when he wrote "Nicholas Nickleby" the grief was still fresh in his heart. We meet *Kate Nickleby* every day among the girls we know, simple and sincere, beautiful and virtuous, but in these twentieth-century days we don't grow up so quickly. Our girls are not thrust into society before they pull off their pinafores, but alas! when poor *Kate Nickleby* lengthened her skirts, she stepped right into young ladyhood, and found the world very wicked and scheming — at least *her* world, which encompassed the burly form of that "baddest" of bad uncles. There never *was* such a villain on land or sea (except possibly all the others Dickens has written about) as *Ralph Nickleby.*

Quite another type of girl was *Miss Fanny Squeers,* and from the earliest times her portraits have taxed the ingenuity of every one of Dickens's illustrators. She was decidedly *not* a charming girl; she had a dumpy figure, a loud voice, a "wall-eye," and a bad temper, and, being a schoolmaster's daughter — especially a Yorkshire schoolmaster's daughter — her English was so very bad it could not be improved.

Poor *Nicholas* had the fortune or misfortune to be very good-looking, a fact which the little "slavey" belonging to the establishment confided to *Miss Fanny Squeers,* who decided to see for herself, and every schoolgirl knows by heart that absurd scene where the valiant *Fanny,* armed with a quill pen, stormed *Nicholas* in the school-room during her father's absence.

"'I beg your pardon,' faltered Miss Squeers, 'I thought my father was — or might be — dear me, how very awkward!'

"'Mr. Squeers is out,' said Nicholas, by no means overcome by the apparition, unexpected though it was.

"'Do you know how long he will be, sir?' asked Miss Squeers with bashful hesitation.

"'He said about an hour,' replied Nicholas — politely, of course, but without any indication of being stricken to the heart by Miss Squeers's charms.

"'I never knew anything happen so cross,' exclaimed the young lady. 'Thank you! I am very sorry I intruded, I am sure. If I hadn't thought my father was here, I wouldn't upon any account have — it is very provoking — must look so very strange,' murmured Miss Squeers, blushing once more, and glancing from the pen in her hand, to Nicholas at his desk, and back again.

"'If that is all you want,' said Nicholas, pointing to the pen and smiling in spite of himself,

at the affected embarrassment of the schoolmaster's daughter, 'perhaps I can supply his place.'"

Of course this was what the adorable *Fanny* wished, and she sidled and bridled as she yielded up the pen. Steel pens were not used in those days, the usual implement for writing was a goose-quill, and the nib was the point of the hollow stem, which had to be cut according to the taste of the writer.

"'Shall it be a hard or a soft nib?' inquired Nicholas, smiling to prevent himself from laughing outright.

"'He *has* a beautiful smile,' thought Miss Squeers.

"'Which did you say?' asked Nicholas.

"'Dear me! I was thinking of something else for the moment, I declare,' replied Miss Squeers. 'Oh! as soft as possible, if you please,' with which words Miss Squeers sighed. It might be, to give Nicholas to understand that her heart was soft, and that the pen was wanted to match."

This ridiculous scene took place in the school-room over which *Nicholas* was presiding, and five-and-twenty wretched, shivering boys were opening wide their five-and-twenty pairs of eyes, in solemn wonder. Then *Nicholas* dropped the pen and stooped to get it, *Miss Squeers* stooped, too, and their heads bumped smartly.

"Ha-ha-ha!" laughed the little boys, and the school-room echoed with the unwonted sound.

Poor little lads! Their sense of humor burst

the bonds, though they knew they would be flogged for it on the morrow.

Now *Miss Squeers's* friend *'Tilda* was a clean-cut type of a pretty, romping, mischievous, good-hearted English country-girl. How well Dickens knew his girls and drew them! He had met them often in Chatham and Rochester, and when *'Tilda* became *Mrs. John Browdie,* which she did without much delay, she made just the lovable, comfortable, pretty, smiling, helpful little matron, who always put the kettle on at the right moment, and knew how to make a happy home for a good husband.

The next girls *Nicholas* met on his travels (it was not long before he had broken a cane over the head of the wretched *Squeers,* and had run away with poor *Smike* from *Dotheboys Hall*) were the *Kenwigses,* four little girls like four little steps, from *Morleena* down, all precisely alike, with their thin little legs and arms, and pig-tail plaits of flaxen hair sticking out from their thin little shoulders. The little *Kenwigses* seldom spoke; they sat about stiffly on their stiff little chairs, and *Morleena* sometimes said "Yes, Ma" or "No, Ma" when fat *Mrs. Kenwigs* prodded her, but they were there, nevertheless, very much alive, in spite of their speechlessness, and *Nicholas* picked up a few stray shillings by teaching them French.

Morleena semed to be the only one of the four litle *Kenwigs* sisters who possessed a name, the other little "pig-tailed" girls played chorus, and

there was a baby-boy christened something or other after his uncle *Lillyvick,* the great man of the family. Indeed, this small and insignificant household, with its small and insignificant hopes and ambitions, stands out very sharply in the novel, though at first sight they appear but stepping-stones to *Nicholas's* rise to fortune. *Uncle Lillyvick,* being a water tax collector, was a personage among his admiring relatives, who hoped in the future to inherit his savings — and the *Kenwigs* children were supposed to dote upon him.

"'Morleena Kenwigs,' cried her mother, in a torrent of affection, 'go down upon your knees to your dear uncle, and beg him to love you all his life through, for he's more a angel than a man, and I've always said so.'"

And *Morleena,* having the family welfare at heart, did as her mother told her, and did much more in her quiet speechless way, all the little *Kenwigses* following suit, except *Baby Kenwigs,* who was too young to follow anything.

On the very highest authority we have it that *Miss Morleena,* aged ten, was a wonderful young woman; her mother said so, and that was enough. At any rate, we know that the little *Kenwigses* were real flesh and blood little girls, far more of flesh and blood than poor *Smike,* who creeps like a shadow through the story.

As *Nicholas* proceeds from adventure to adventure, we cannot help seeing how the life of the

real Charles Dickens becomes interwoven with the life of his hero. For instance, we all know that Dickens's earliest ambitions pointed towards the stage at that time, and, had the scales leaned ever so slightly in that direction, he would gladly have followed that fascinating profession, and no doubt with some distinction. So when *Nicholas* chanced to meet *Mr. Vincent Crummles,* it is small wonder that he jumped at the offer of that gentleman, and soon found himself treading the boards with much more ease and comfort than when teaching at five pounds a year, in *Mr. Squeers's* select establishment. And here we come across another girl, in the person of *Miss Ninette Crummles,* better known as the *Infant Phenomenon.*

There was never a child like that child, and the things she could not do while twirling on her toes, were certainly not worth doing at all by anybody. In fact, all the *Crummles's* were celebrated in some theatrical way, even the pony, behind which *Mr. Crummles* drove *Nicholas* and *Smike* to Portsmouth, where they were to make their professional débût.

"'Many and many is the circuit this pony has gone,' said Mr. Crummles, flicking him skillfully on the eyelid for old acquaintance sake. 'He is quite one of us. His mother was on the stage.'

"'Was she?' rejoined Nicholas.

"'She ate apple-pie at a circus for upward of fourteen years,' said the manager, 'fired pistols,

and went to bed in a night-cap, in short, took the low comedy entirely. His father was a dancer.'

"'Was he at all distinguished?'

"'Not very,' said the manager. 'He was rather a low sort of pony. The fact is, he had been originally jobbed out by the day, and he never quite got over his old habits. He was clever in melodrama, too, but too broad — too broad. When the mother died, he took the port-wine business.'

"'The port-wine business!' cried Nicholas.

"'Drinking port-wine with the clown,' said the manager; 'but he was greedy, and one night bit off the bowl of the glass and choked himself, so his vulgarity was the death of him at last.'"

With such talent among even the horses, it was but natural that the *Infant Phenomenon* should be a marvel, and the fact that she had stayed ten years of age for five years at least only made her prowess the more remarkable.

Nicholas and *Smike,* tired and dispirited after their long runaway tramp, were glad to find a refuge in this wonderful dramatic circle, and no doubt Dickens related many of his own experiences and described many of his own associates among the queer characters he encountered behind the scenes.

Madeline Bray, the only other girl in the story, is almost too shadowy to be a real girl. She is just another step in *Nicholas Nickleby's* career — the girl he loved — but, in spite of her sweetness

and her connection with the very dramatic plot, she fails to become a living character. *Kate,* with her steadfast truth, her spirit, and, above all, her likeness to her brother, is much more convincing.

The novel is full of portraits taken from life, as well as of ideal pictures painted by the master hand of Dickens himself, so true to life that they seem like life itself. Indeed, as Charles Dickens and his books acquired more and more of a hold upon his readers, it became the fashion to believe that Dickens's characters were quite out of the ordinary. It was customary to say: "Oh, he is odd — he reminds me of one of Dickens's characters."

Now, this was rather hard upon a great writer like Dickens, who had the rare gift of painting life exactly as he found it. The *Cheeryble Brothers, Tim Linkinwater, Miss La Creevy,* even the crazy old gentleman who lived next door to *Mrs. Nickleby,* all stand equally life-like before us. Yet from among them the *Cheeryble Brothers* are the only portraits from life.

The writing of "Nicholas Nickleby" took from April, 1838, until October, 1839, for, as the story appeared in serial form, twenty numbers were the usual limit. Dickens, young as he was, was somewhat a creature of habit in the writing of his books; because he chanced to be out of town when the first installment of "Pickwick" appeared, he contrived also to be absent when the first installment of "Nickleby" was published. He summoned

Forster, his trusted friend, on a Saturday night, and at one o'clock Sunday morning the two men went for a horseback ride, the excited young author carrying the glad news that on the first day fifty thousand copies of that first number had been sold to the eager reading public.

So "Nicholas Nickleby" emerged into its waiting niche, amid the loud tooting of the trumpet of fame. Its wholesomeness, its truthfulness, and above all, its dramatic force, attracted readers young and old.

One small boy wrote to Dickens concerning the rewards and punishments to be meted out in the course of the story, and in a very funny letter Dickens replied to Master Hastings Hughes, stating that his many suggestions should be followed to the letter if possible; and it is highly probable, that in the course of his novels, which generally appeared serially, many similar suggestions guided his imagination. Many Yorkshire schoolmasters claimed relationship to *Squeers;* but, oddly enough, that most unpleasant character was the outcome of the shameful conditions of the cheap schools, and not a photograph of any special person.

Suffice it to say, that, little by little, these cheap schools disappeared, the cruel Yorkshire schoolmaster slunk away into oblivion, while "Nicholas Nickleby" reared its proud crest as a monument to the downfall of all the Squeerses in the world.

There is one great chapter of retribution written

especially, we suppose, for Master Hastings Hughes, describing a wild scene of insurrection at *Dotheboys Hall,* where *Mrs. Squeers,* upon her knees, with pinioned arms, is forced to drink gulps of her own nauseous treacle, and *Master Wackford Squeers* is held head down in a sticky basin of this delightful beverage.

The boyish soul of Dickens delighted in this scene of riot, and it was this same youthful spirit in him which got into his books and made them live. Here he was — only twenty-six — on the threshold of his life, and the pinnacle of his greatness. The youth in him, crushed and hidden in boyhood, bubbled over now, stirred into quicker life by the man's experience. At an age when most men begin, he had achieved, and there was more, much more, to come.

CHAPTER VII.

MASTER HUMPHREY'S FIRST TALE.

WHEN an author becomes enormously popular, as Charles Dickens did in his early youth, the *real* man is apt to be overlooked in the public interest which clings about him. But this young man was tasting all the sweets in life. Just before beginning "Nicholas Nickleby" in March, 1838, his second child was born, a little girl whom he called Mary, better known to the world who knew Dickens, as Mamie, and named, of course, after that other Mary, whose memory was always fresh. Great events — such as the coming of a new daughter or the beginning of a new book — were always celebrated by a long, hard horseback ride, and on the occasion of Mamie's birth, the two inseparables, Forster and Dickens, rode fifteen miles out on the Great North Road, dined at the "Red Lion" in Barnet, and brought their much-enduring horses limping home.

So there was a new daughter a month *before* the opening chapter of "Nickleby," and twenty-two months later, in October, 1839, the month *after* its completion, little Kate Dickens came to join her sister. Charles, Mary, and Kate, three names

so happily associated with his own life, were the names of his children, and in the family history these three stand prominently forth from among the ten children who came to him in the course of the years.

In November, 1838, when "Nickleby" was in its early installments, one Edward Stirling chopped it up to suit his own purposes, and, making a farce out of it, produced it with a cast of clever actors at the Adelphi Theater. The author even had the impertinence to dedicate the play to Dickens, and we are informed on good authority that Dickens saw it and was much pleased with the acting. The same thing was done with "Oliver Twist," and yet the author could do nothing to protect himself under the then existing copyright laws in England, and anyone could "adapt" who chanced to be clever at that sort of stealing.

In March, 1839, Dickens established his mother and father in a pretty cottage at Alphingham, a mile from Exeter, and took much boyish delight in beautifying and furnishing it. The name of the little home was Mile-End Cottage—"and if they are not pleased with it, I shall be grievously disappointed," he said to one of his friends. To another he wrote:

"The house is on the high-road to Plymouth, and though in the very heart of Devonshire, there is as much long stage and posting life as you would find in Piccadilly. The situation is charming.

Meadows in front, an orchard running parallel to the garden hedge, richly wooded hills closing in the prospect behind, and away to the left, before a splendid view of the hill on which Exeter is situated, the Cathedral towers rising up into the sky in the most picturesque manner possible. I don't think I ever saw so cheerful and pleasant a spot."

And this is the place where *Nicholas Nickleby* settled his mother and *Kate,* described in *Mrs. Nickleby's* graphic style as "the beautiful little thatched white house, one storey high, covered all over with ivy and creeping plants, with an exquisite little porch with twining honeysuckles and all sorts of things."

The house where the greater part of "Nicholas Nickleby" was written, No. 48 Doughty Street, is the only London home of the novelist which remains unchanged in appearance through the years. Some few chapters, however, were written at Elm Cottage, Twickenham, and in November, 1839, two months after the completion of "Nicholas Nickleby," he moved to No. 1 Devonshire Terrace, Regent's Park, which he occupied until 1851, and where some of the happiest years of his life were spent.

The habit of writing serial stories had taken a firm hold upon Dickens. They seemed to please his readers and keep up their interest. Having resigned the editorship of *Bentley's Miscellany* sometime after the publication of "Oliver Twist,"

that active, restless mind of his was quick to seize on a new idea, and the character of a certain *Master Humphrey* began to take shape and color in his vivid imagination.

The real Master Humphrey was a worthy clock-maker at Barnard Castle, Durham, who, when about sixteen years of age, fashioned the timepiece which Dickens afterwards made famous as "Master Humphrey's Clock." When he was traveling among the Yorkshire schools, he saw this clock standing just within the doorway of Humphrey's little shop, for Barnard Castle lay upon his route, and the quaint character and still quainter clock roused his interest. The idea popped into his head to wind up Master Humphrey's Clock and give the name to a new periodical to be issued weekly, so the stories which he proposed to write in future could come closer and more frequently to his readers.

This *Master Humphrey* was supposed to sit always beside his Clock in the chimney-corner, a serene, quiet, patient old man, slightly deformed, but sweet-natured through it all, and full of memories from childhood to old age, such as old men have. He was not friendless, but he was somewhat lonely, and from his crippled childhood he had been wont to keep a little apart from others. As a boy he had felt very keenly the difference between himself and other children. He says of himself: "I used frequently to dream of it, and now my heart

aches for that child as if I had never been he, when I think how often he awoke from some fairy change to his old form, and sobbed himself to sleep again."

Dickens always had a great fondness for little lame boys, his own nephew — his sister Fanny's son — was a delicate little cripple, a gentle, patient child, who served as a model for many beautiful portraits, notably *Paul Dombey* and *Tiny Tim*.

Master Humphrey goes on to explain that all his life he had felt a strange fondness for the old furniture in his room; he regarded each piece as an old friend, and no money could express its value to him. He tells us:

"Chief and first among all these is my Clock — my old, cheerful, companionable Clock. How can I ever convey to others an idea of the comfort and consolation that this old Clock has been for years to me!

"It is associated with my earliest recollections. It stood upon the staircase at home nigh sixty years ago. I like it for that, but it is not on that account, nor because it is a quaint old thing, in a huge oaken case curiously and richly carved, that I prize it as I do; I incline to it as if it were alive and could understand and give me back the love I bear it."

What old *Master Humphrey* liked about his Clock was its voice, its cheerful way of ticking the minutes and seconds, its clear, bell-like ringing of the hour. It was almost human, and was known

throughout the little village where the old man lived as "Master Humphrey's Clock."

Now in the dark closet where the pendulum swung, were piles of dusty papers, closely written manuscripts placed there from time to time by *Master Humphrey* and the *deaf gentleman,* his constant associate, and these were given to the world of readers, once a week, through the mouth of *Master Humphrey* himself. It was a quaint, fantastic idea, and there was much of good reading in the few numbers which were published, but the public felt defrauded; there was no story from the pen of Charles Dickens, and the circulation of the new weekly dwindled so alarmingly that at last *Master Humphrey* was obliged to draw a thicker manuscript from the pendulum closet, and, as he carefully unrolled it, smoothing a page or two here and there, something dropped from between the leaves. It was the pictured face of a child, fair and innocent, with clustering curls and deep blue, almost unearthly eyes. This was little *Nellie Trent,* whose Grandfather kept *The Old Curiosity Shop,* which gave the story its name, and this was Dickens's promise fulfilled, to his readers, who ceased clamoring — like *Oliver Twist* — for more, the minute he gave them what they wanted. And this is also Dickens's first tribute to little girlhood. Around this small, delicate young creature, great events darted and whirled like heavy clouds. With none to think for her, none to care for her but a

half-crazed old man, the child moved through the story like a fairy.

Many argue that the character of *Little Nell* is forced and unnatural, that no little girls ever existed who were quite as perfect as *Little Nell,* but, if they will consider, they may change their minds. A ray of light burns with wonderful brilliance against a background of pitchy darkness, so the white soul of this child, which was as the white soul of many another child, looked all the whiter for the dense shadows of sin from which it emerged. Dickens drew this child with the hand of love, forging another link to the memory of Mary Hogarth. She was to be the one pure creature in the turmoil and struggle of the life about her, and the fate which had snatched their home from them certainly spread a queer feast for the old man and the little girl, as they wandered through villages and rested at wayside inns, sleeping often in the open air under the stars. On they plodded, foot-sore and weary, from day to day, anxious only to leave London far away, not caring where their steps might lead them — the feeble old man and the desperate child who was eager not only to save him from his creditors, but to save him from himself. It is indeed no wonder that *Little Nell's* small body could not keep pace with her indomitable courage.

We meet her first, or at least *Master Humphrey* met her (since he is supposed to tell the story) in

the heart of the big City of London, quite alone at night.

"I turned hastily around," he said, "and found at my elbow a pretty little girl, who begged to be directed to a certain street at a considerable distance, and indeed in quite another quarter of the town.

"'It is a very long way from here,' said I, 'my child.'

"'I know that, sir,' she replied timidly, 'I am afraid it is a very long way; for I came from there to-night.'

"'Alone?' said I in some surprise.

"'Oh, yes, I don't mind that, but I am a little frightened now, for I have lost my road.'

"'And what made you ask it of me? Suppose I should tell you wrong?'

"'I am sure you will not do that,' said the little creature, 'you are such a very old gentleman and walk so slow yourself.'

"I cannot describe how much I was impressed by this appeal and the energy with which it was made, which brought a tear into the child's clear eye, and made her slight figure tremble as she looked up into my face.

"'Come,' said I, 'I'll take you there.'"

So *Little Nell* — for it was she — put her hand confidingly into *Master Humphrey's,* and so the tale began.

The place where *Little Nell* lived "was one of

those receptacles for old and curious things which seem to crouch in odd corners of the town, and to hide their musty treasures from the public eye in jealousy and distrust." And here she was content to stay with an old, old man "whose haggard aspect was wonderfully suited to the place; he might have groped among old churches and tombs, and deserted houses, and gathered all the spoils with his own hands. There was nothing in the whole collection but was in keeping with himself: nothing that looked older or more worn than he."

We cannot marvel, then, that in such strange surroundings a quaint old-fashioned child should blossom, a child with the mother-love strong within her, to be lavished on the childish old man; that when the time came for sacrifice, she should be the victim, and that she should hold "her solitary way among a crowd of wild, grotesque companions; the only pure, fresh, youthful object in the throng."

Everybody who is anybody has a grandfather, or has had one, or maybe two, and grandfathers usually are fine old gentlemen, who are given to spoiling and petting and making much of their grandchildren, telling them stories of earlier times, and making themselves so entertaining and agreeable that an hour spent by them in the nursery is a red-letter hour, indeed! But this grandfather of *Little Nell's* was a very ghostly old fellow. To begin with, he never answered to a name through-

out the book; he was called "the old man" or "grandfather," as the case might be; but if he had a name he shut it up in his withered old breast, and no one was any the wiser. Even when the *single gentleman,* his brother, went to hunt for him, we are still in the dark, for nobody knew *him* save as the *single gentleman,* until he added to his title that of "the old man's brother." *Little Nell's* mother was the *old man's* daughter, so he could not lay claim to the name of Trent, which was hers, hence he moved close by the child's side, all through the story — a gaunt and nameless shadow.

At fourteen, *Nell* was a beautiful little creature, so beautiful, indeed, that men began to look at her with an eye to marriage. Her own brother, a precious young villain, had promised her small hand to a certain *Mr. Richard Swiveller,* his friend and crony, and *Daniel Quilp,* the dwarf villain, whom Dickens had painted in heavy black smudges, also cast his eyes upon her and wondered if she would not make a very pretty second *Mrs. Quilp,* when he got rid of Number One.

All this wicked plotting which went on about her, even while it could not mar her sweetness, made her grave and serious beyond her years, and the absence of any young companions made her turn to her grandfather with all the wealth of her love, and, when circumstances drove them from *The Old Curiosity Shop* to become wanderers, it was this

wonderful protecting love of hers which shielded him and sheltered him along their way.

We must not forget all this when we read about *Little Nell* and complain that she is too good for this earth. All her life she had taken care of her grandfather. She it was who planned their flight; she it was who kept the few gold pieces — all they possessed in the wide world — and time and time again she saved the weak old man from his besetting sins, the love of money and of gambling.

But the life told upon this pretty home-child; as her soul grew stronger, her body grew weaker; the long tramps, the exposure to rain and wind, the heavy night air, would have killed a stronger person, and so *Little Nell* sickened, and, after much weariness and pain, she died, when not quite seventeen, and Dickens mourned for her with all the grief of his great heart. He hated to have her die; he lingered over the last part of her short life, and lived over again the death of Mary Hogarth.

Yet *Little Nell's* adventures were not all sad, some were indeed most laughable. The two quiet wanderers fell in with an odd lot of people. Their first acquaintances ran a Punch and Judy show, and went from village to village with their little theater, *Nell* and her grandfather trudging along, glad to have found even these wayside friends.

At the "Jolly Sandboys'" inn, they came across the owner of a band of trained dogs, also exhibit-

ing along the road, and the dogs themselves were allowed to enter and make themselves at home. Dickens was always very happy in his descriptions of dogs, and *Jerry,* the trainer, certainly knew his family. *Nell* wished to throw some meat to the hungry group, who were patiently waiting, on their hind legs, but he stopped her:

"'No, my dear, no, not an atom from anybody's hand but mine, if you please. That dog,' said Jerry, pointing out the old leader of the troop, and speaking in a terrible voice, 'lost a half-penny to-day. *He* goes without his supper.'

"The unfortunate creature dropped upon his forelegs directly, wagged his tail, and looked imploringly at his master.

"'You must be more careful, sir,' said Jerry, walking coolly to the chair where he had placed the organ, and setting the stop. 'Come here. Now, sir, you play away at that while we have supper, and leave off if you dare.'

"The dog immediately began to grind the most mournful music. His master, having shown him the whip, resumed his seat and called up the others, who, at his directions, formed in a row, standing upright as a file of soldiers.

"'Now, gentlemen,' said Jerry, looking at them attentively, 'the dog whose name's called, eats. The dogs whose names ain't called, keeps quiet. Carlo!'

"The lucky dog whose name was called, snapped

up the morsel thrown towards him, but none of the others moved a muscle. In this manner they were fed at the discretion of their master. Meanwhile, the dog in disgrace ground hard at the organ, sometimes in quick time, sometimes in slow, but never leaving off for an instant."

As a boy, there is no doubt that Dickens was fairly intimate with these traveling show-people, who wandered about the Kentish country where he lived, for he seemed familiar with all the tricks of their poor trades, and kind-hearted *Mrs. Jarley,* the proprietress of the far-famed Wax Works, was most certainly a portrait from life.

But in spite of our fondness for *Little Nell* and our sorrow over her untimely death, we find ourselves making excuses for her from the very beginning, and this was not really what the author intended. Without realizing what he had done, he had turned a charming little heroine into an unconscious little prig, and few people — even to this day — can be induced to look at her through his eyes.

Great authors often unthinkingly do these things. It is told of Thackeray that one of his characters in "The Newcomes," possessed a great vice, of which he was ignorant. This was a certain *Mrs. Mackenzie,* otherwise known as *The Campaigner.* "Thackeray didn't know it, but she drank!" declared one of his friends, and no doubt she was right. So with Dickens; he started out to

create an exceptional child, and he did; but it was not the child he thought of so tenderly, it was the little slavey in the Brass's establishment, known to fame as the *Marchioness,* who was indeed the real heroine of "The Old Curiosity Shop."

The story, indeed, had little to do with its title, for beyond our first glimpse of the dingy, dusty old place, we see nothing more of it. In fact, it is to be doubted if the *Marchioness* knew a thing about it, for when first seen she was picking up, literally, the very crumbs of existence in the household of *Sampson Brass* and his flinty sister *Sally,* who lived in a small dark house and practiced law in a mean, cheap way. They were not very pleasant people — this brother and sister — but they ran a pretty lively business — *Miss Sally* knowing quite enough of the law to be her brother's able assistant — until *Mr. Richard Swiveller* came upon the scene and took much of the business out of her hands.

As *Sampson Brass's* head clerk, he was often left in charge in the big, dirty office, and here he was startled one day by a loud knocking at the door.

"'Come in!' he called.

"'Oh, please,' said a little voice, very low down in the doorway, 'will you come and show the lodgings?'

"Dick leaned on the table and descried a small, slipshod girl, in a dirty, coarse apron and bib, which left nothing of her visible but her face and feet; she

might as well have been dressed in a violin-case.

"'Why, who are you?' said Dick.

"To which the only reply was, 'Oh, please, will you come and show the lodgings?'

"There never was such an old-fashioned child in her looks and manner. She must have been at work from her cradle. She seemed as much afraid of Dick as Dick was amazed at her.

"'I haven't got anything to do with the lodgings,' said Dick. 'Tell 'em to call again.'

"'Oh, but please will you come and show the lodgings,' returned the girl; 'it's eighteen shillings a week, and us finding plate and linen. Boots and clothes is extra, and fires in winter-time is eightpence a day.'

"'Why don't you show 'em yourself? You seem to know all about 'em,' said Dick.

"'Miss Sally said I wasn't to, because people wouldn't believe the attendance was good, if they saw how small I was first.'

"'Well, but they'll see how small you are afterwards, won't they?' said Dick.

"'Ah! but then they'll have taken 'em for a fortnight certain,' replied the child, with a shrewd look; 'and people don't like moving when they're once settled.'

"'This is a queer sort of thing,' muttered Dick, rising. 'What do you mean to say you are — the cook?'

"'Yes, I do plain cooking!' replied the child.

'I'm housemaid, too; I do all the work of the house.'"

She was a pathetic, meager little figure, a pack of skin and bones, topped by a sharp, thin face, out of which the eyes looked hungrily. She was so small — yet for all that, so alive, so active, that one was quite sure she was telling the truth when she boasted of doing all the housework.

Dickens was particularly happy in the drawing of this remarkable child, chiefly because, as we know, the little maid-of-all-work who came with the family from the Chatham workhouse rose in his mind as the living portrait of his poor little *Marchioness.* What hopes and aspirations were hidden beneath the dingy apron and the extinguishing cap, who can say! This small person knew nothing about herself; never within her recollection had she owned a name; her age, too, was a mystery, she might have been six or sixteen or sixty — she was so young and so old. She had not been brought up in the straight and narrow road of virtue, and the *Brass* household was not exactly the place where virtue had its own reward. Her inquisitive eye being on a level with the key-hole, much useful information came to her through that convenient opening. Her real acquaintance with *Mr. Richard Swiveller* was the outcome of this peeping. The poor child saw him playing a solitary game of cribbage in the deserted office, late one evening, and he caught the gleam of her eye

at the key-hole. "He stole softly to the door and pounced upon her before she was aware of his approach.

"'Oh I didn't mean any harm, indeed, upon my word I didn't,' cried the small servant, struggling like a much larger one. 'It's so very dull downstairs. Please don't you tell upon me, please don't.'

"'Tell upon you!' said Dick. 'Do you mean to say you were looking through the key-hole for company?'

"'Yes, upon my word, I was,' replied the small servant.

"'How long have you been cooling your eye there?' said Dick.

"'Oh, ever since you first began to play them cards and long before.'"

The kind heart of *Mr. Swiveller* was touched, and he asked her in; but the small maid was afraid of *Miss Sally's* wrath if she left her kitchen. Whereupon her new friend decided to go down and visit her; also to teach her the secrets of that wonderful game.

Something beat tumultuously beneath the apron — it was the grateful heart of the little servant, for *Mr. Swiveller* not only taught her cribbage, but, seeing how thin she was, decided that she needed bread and meat, and spread a delicious treat before her bewildered, hungry eyes, and suddenly within that same little heart sprang a feeling of

dog-like devotion for the idle, happy-go-lucky lawyer's clerk, who in his facetious manner dubbed her the *Marchioness,* and thereafter treated her with a courtliness which, whether real or feigned, pleased the child exceedingly.

Even a kitchen-maid may have great moments, and the *Marchioness* gloried in this new name; it suggested coronets and satin gowns and dainty slippers, to replace the cap and apron, and slipshod shoes and stockings out at the heels; and to her, the shabby and seedy *Richard,* "down on his luck" and out at the elbows, was a very prince among men, which showed that at least the small servant had an imagination.

Indeed, these two obscure, rather common-place people, give just that human touch to the whole story without which there would have been neither light nor color. *Quilp* was a goblin; the *Brasses,* attending ghouls; and *Little Nell,* a flitting wraith — a ghost — an angel; the *single gentleman,* the *Garlands,* even *Kit,* were but a supporting background for the carefully planned plot; but *Dick Swiveller* and his *Marchioness,* ignorant of everything going on about them, yet proved the most important link in the story, because of the *Marchioness's* propensity for looking and listening through key-holes. Not that it is right to do such things, but when one has been locked for the night, in a big, dark kitchen, and accidentally finds another key, it is an easy matter to make one's escape,

and many a night this small elfin child enjoyed the freedom of the house, quite unknown to her hard-hearted jailer. It was on such an occasion that the *Marchioness,* hearing voices beyond a certain closed door, put her eye to the key-hole and then her ear, gleaning thereby much general information which proved useful in the course of the story.

It was when *Dick Swiveller* lay at the point of death in his lonely lodgings that the real gold shone forth in the character of the forlorn little *Marchioness.* For the last time making use of her secret key, she slipped from the house, found the sick man's lodgings, and, calling herself his sister, went boldly upstairs and took charge. Faithfully she stuck to her post — night and day — until *Mr. Swiveller* rewarded her devotion by opening his eyes and proceeding to get better. Poor little *Marchioness!* Such a little bag of bones to hold such tender, human feelings! We cannot help laughing at her and loving her at the same time.

And this is where Dickens was at his best; there was no striving after effect — no trying to paint a picture, as in the case of dear, saintly *Little Nell.* This little waif sprang out of the darkness, a fairy in disguise, a real thinking, feeling child, for all her wizen, old-woman ways, and to *Dick Swiveller,* lying weak and helpless in his bed, she seemed a veritable angel. No doubt he could see celestial wings sprouting gloriously from the thin shoulder-blades, and we are glad to know that her *Grace,*

the *Marchioness,* attained her heart's desire in the end.

It is strange how one's dearest hopes are often miscarried. All the love and devotion and tenderness in Dickens's heart, was poured into the life and death of *Little Nell.* Towards the close of the story he became very ill — probably the result of overwork — for *Master Humphrey's Clock* proved a very serious undertaking, and the task of presenting an installment of "The Old Curiosity Shop" every week was stupendous. The killing of *Little Nell* nearly broke his heart; he loved the child as if she was his own; her death cast its shadow upon him; and the vision of Mary Hogarth opened all the old gateways of his grief.

Altogether the story was a brilliant success; it satisfied so many in so many diffierent ways. Originally intended as a short tale of half-a-dozen chapters, it grew to much more imposing size, from the very needs of the characters, and it is pretty certain that when good *Master Humphrey* commenced to read from the yellow manuscript he found in the old case where the pendulum swung, he had no idea how long it would take to reach the end. And that the story lives to-day, and is loved alike by young and old, is the best tribute to its worth.

After Dickens's death, far away in the Sierras, our own Bret Harte wrote the following lines to his memory and that of *Little Nell:*

Above the pines the moon was slowly drifting,
The river sang below;
The dim Sierras, far beyond, uplifting
Their minarets of snow:

The roaring camp-fire, with rude humour, painted
The ruddy tints of health
On haggard face and form that drooped and fainted
In the fierce race for wealth;

Till one arose, and from his pack's scant treasure
A hoarded volume drew,
And cards were dropped from hands of listless leisure
To hear the tale anew;

And then, while round them shadows gathered faster,
And as the fire-light fell,
He read aloud the book wherein the Master
Had writ of "Litttle Nell."

Perhaps 'twas boyish fancy, for the reader
Was youngest of them all,
But, as he read, from clustering pine and cedar
A silence seemed to fall;

The fir-trees gathering closer in the shadows,
Listened in every spray,
While the whole camp, with "Nell" on English
meadows,
Wandered and lost their way.

And so in mountain solitudes — o'ertaken
As by some spell divine —
Their cares dropped from them like the needles shaken
From out the gusty pine.

Lost is that camp, and wasted all its fire;
And he who wrought that spell?
Ah, towering pine and stately Kentish spire,
Ye have one tale to tell:

Lost is that camp! but let its fragrant story
Blend with the breath that thrills
With hop-vines' incense all the pensive glory
That fills the Kentish hills.

And on that grave where English oak and holly
And laurel wreaths entwine,
Deem it not all a too presumptuous folly,—
This spray of Western pine!

CHAPTER VIII.

DICKENS AND THE HISTORICAL NOVEL.

MASTER HUMPHREY'S CLOCK ticked away most industriously from April 21, 1840, until November 27, 1841. There were eighty-eight weekly numbers in all, thoroughly illustrated by the artists who made Dickens's works a specialty; and probably this enterprising periodical would have lived much longer, had Dickens been able to bear the continual strain upon his energy. Once he had fallen ill during the writing of "The Old Curiosity Shop," but he never missed a weekly installment. He was far from well, however, when he began to think of another serial. The scene was, as usual, to be laid around London, but the time, 1775–80, was remote enough to give him an historical background, and the half-forgotten London Riots had never — to his knowledge — found their way into fiction; they never made much stir in history, for they were promptly quelled at the very beginning, and Lord George Gordon, the leader, was thrown into prison. It was a war between the Protestants and the Papists, the mob was Protestant, and the war-cry "No Popery!" rang men-

acingly through the London streets. Poor Lord Gordon was hopelessly mad when his brief glory came to an end; indeed, he may have been on the verge of insanity when the Riots broke out. At any rate, it was a mad cause with a mad ending, and it is little wonder that the hero of "Barnaby Rudge" should be a witless fellow, in short, *Barnaby* himself, so impressed was the author with the madness of it all.

Dickens was from first to last in the heart of the mob; being of the people, he saw through their eyes, and through the vivid scenes which led to the burning of Newgate, it was the feelings of the mob with which he had to do. Even in a state of frenzy he knew the people — knew how a breath would sway them, how a word would stir them — knew how childish, how idiotic a mob may be; and so he drew *Barnaby Rudge,* and thrust the idiot into the midst of it.

This was the second of *Master Humphrey's* tales, and at its close the Clock ran down. Too much pressure had been put upon it, too much work upon the editor, and with a few closing words *Master Humphrey* shut the door where the pendulum swung — and spoke no more.

It is rather curious that Dickens wrote but two novels with historical backgrounds: "Barnaby Rudge," a tale of hot-headed youth, where the mob rent the air with boyish shouts and rough laughter, and "A Tale of Two Cities," where

sullen hate burned low and red, where there was no laughter, but the muffled roar of angry men and women — a mob of London and a mob of Paris, with nearly twenty years between the writing; the first — the work of eager young enthusiasm, the last, of mature thought and perfect art.

The magic pen of Scott had burrowed into the history of centuries ago, and had told of people and happenings in those remote times, describing manners and customs far removed from those of his own day, showing us pictures upon which even now we love to gaze. Dickens did more; he took us by the hand and drew us with him into the very midst of yesterday — the yesterday of history, but not so far away as to make the people seem unreal.

"Barnaby Rudge" opens in 1775, and "A Tale of Two Cities" but a few years later, during the last years of the French Revolution. There is a long step between *Barnaby* and *Sydney Carton,* yet both heroes stand out very sharply, the lovable idiot —with his shock of red hair, his wide-open staring eyes, his fantastic dress, and the still more fantastic bird, which was his inseparable companion — and the man of fine intellect, befogged by too much wine, dragged down, indeed, to the lowest depths, only to be lifted by a great deed, to the very heights.

No two stories could be more unlike, yet the life and motion seem the same; only in "A Tale

of Two Cities" the greatness of the theme cast all the actors in heroic mold. We know that the tragedy of the French Revolution existed and blighted that fair land, while the Gordon Riots were but a tempest in a teapot, just a few hangings at the end — and all was over.

"Barnaby Rudge" is bubbling with youth; it is the work of a vigorous young man, and it deals with men of types — ranging from the courtly old villain, *Sir John Chester,* to the fine figure and vacant mind of poor *Barnaby,* who inspires our love and pity as he dances his way through the book.

Strangely full of wisdom is this idiot boy sometimes, a poet, too, in his childish, simple nature, fond of the outer world, quick to see the beauties of a sunrise or a sunset, a flower or a tree; adoring his widowed mother, but giving the best of his affection to *Grip,* the raven, who was always with him wherever he traveled — and *Barnaby's* restless feet were always traveling somewhere. Often he wandered for days, and *Grip* went, too, sometimes perched upon his master's shoulder, sometimes in the basket which *Barnaby* always carried stocked with food for his favorite, and a bite for himself.

This was a remarkable bird, and, if ever there was a portrait drawn from life, *Grip's* was surely one. Dickens owned two of these birds; the first of which was actually named Grip. This raven was the delight and terror of the family circle —

but he came to an untimely end. He had been ailing for some days — as Topping, the coachman, reported — but somehow Dickens was quite unprepared for the end, which came suddenly. He wrote to his friend, Maclise, a full account of the Raven's last hours:

"You will be greatly shocked and grieved to hear that the Raven is no more. He expired today at a few minutes after twelve o'clock. He had been ailing for a few days, but we anticipated no serious result, conjecturing that a portion of the white paint he swallowed last summer might be lingering about his vitals. Yesterday afternoon he was taken so much worse that I sent an express for the medical gentleman, who promptly attended and administered a powerful dose of castor oil. Under the influence of this medicine, he recovered so far as to be able, at 8 o'clock P. M., to bite Topping. This morning at daybreak he appeared better and partook plentifully of some warm gruel, the flavor of which he appeared to relish. Toward eleven o'clock he was so much worse that it was found necessary to muffle the stable knocker. At half past or thereabouts, he was heard talking to himself about the horse and Topping's family, and to add some incoherent expressions which are supposed to have been either a foreboding of his approaching dissolution or some wishes relative to the disposal of his little property, consisting chiefly of half-pence which he had buried in different

parts of the garden. On the clock striking twelve he appeared slightly agitated, but he soon recovered. walked twice or thrice along the coach house, stopped to bark, staggered, and exclaimed, 'Halloa, old Girl!' (his favorite expression) and died. He behaved throughout with decent fortitude, equanimity, and self-possession. I deeply regret that, being in ignorance of his danger, I did not attend to receive his last instructions.

"Something remarkable about his eyes occasioned Topping to run for the doctor at twelve. When they returned together — our friend was gone. It was the medical gentleman who informed me of his decease. He did it with caution and delicacy, preparing me by the remark that 'a jolly queer start had taken place.' I am not wholly free from suspicions of poison. A malicious butcher has been heard to say that he would 'do' for him. His plea was that he would not be molested in taking orders . . . by any bird that wore a tail. . . . Kate is as well as can be expected. The children seem rather glad of it. He bit their ankles, but that was in play."

This letter was sealed with an enormous mourning badge and sent to the famous artist, who immortalized Grip's entrance into a new life by a wonderful pen and ink sketch of the Raven, stiff in death, while his soul — represented by several little white-winged ravens — is soaring in the clouds to that sphere where good ravens go.

As "Barnaby Rudge" was still unfinished, another *Grip* had to be found. He tells us in the preface to the book that a friend of his in Yorkshire discovered an older and more gifted raven, at a village public-house, which he purchased from the landlord and sent up to him. He writes:

"The first act of this Sage was to administer to the effects of his predecessor, by disinterring all the cheese and half-pence he had buried in the garden, a work of immense labor and research, to which he devoted all the energies of his mind. When he had achieved this task, he applied himself to the acquisition of stable language, in which he became such an adept that he would perch outside my window and drive imaginary horses with great skill all day. Perhaps even I never saw him at his best, for his former master sent his duty with him, 'and if I wished the bird to come out very strong, would I be so good as to show him a drunken man'— which I never did, having (unfortunately) none but sober people at hand. . . . Once I met him unexpectedly about half-a-mile from my house, walking down the middle of a public street, attended by a pretty large crowd, and spontaneously exhibiting the whole of his accomplishments. His gravity under those trying circumstances I can never forget, nor the extraordinary gallantry with which, refusing to be brought home, he defended himself behind a pump until overpowered by numbers."

It is wonderful that raven number two lived as long as he did, for his master records the most remarkable diet: he dug the mortar out of the garden wall, ate the putty from the frames that held the window-panes, and swallowed in splinters most of a wooden staircase; and after three years he, too, died, quietly, before the kitchen fire.

"He kept his eye to the last upon the meat as it roasted, and suddenly turned over on his back, with a sepulchral cry of 'Cuckoo!' Since then I have been ravenless."

The first and best beloved raven was stuffed, and lived in a glass case in his master's study. After Dickens died, there was a great sale at Gad's Hill, and the bird — in the heat and excitement of the bidding — brought many hundred pounds.

All through the story flitted this raven, a bird of omen, croaking out queer things that seemed almost impossible for a bird to say, yet the power of speech was undeniably his, and his presence — always with this idiot boy — seemed to bestow upon poor *Barnaby* a little of the sense he lacked.

Edgar Allan Poe — who was one of Dickens's famous American critics — may probably have obtained his first conception of "The Raven" in this way, for the poem did not appear till 1845, while "Barnaby Rudge" was published in *Master Humphrey's Clock* in 1841.

There was a dark and gruesome mystery running through this tale, but there were some bits of

color, even the glint of rainbow tints round little *Dolly Varden.* Charming, simple, and very young — *Miss Dolly* soon became the toast of the town, after she had glided from beneath the pen-point of the author. There were only five women mentioned in the book — the pale-faced mother of *Barnaby, Mrs. Varden* and her attendant, *Miss Miggs, Emma Haredale,* and little *Dolly,* the streak of sunshine in the book.

Having two little girls of his own, it was only natural that Dickens should bestow much attention upon the girls in his books. We see *Dolly* first peeping out of her bedroom window, a picture of youth and roguishness; "a face lighted up by the loveliest pair of sparkling eyes that ever locksmith looked upon; the face of a pretty laughing girl; dimpled and fresh and healthful, the very impersonation of good humor and blooming beauty."

Old *Gabriel Varden,* the jolly locksmith, considered his little daughter the very light of his eyes, and, but for her, the old fellow would have had a sorry time of it at home; for *Mrs. Varden* was one of those good ladies with a perpetual chip on her shoulder, and *Miss Miggs,* her grim, gaunt handmaiden, saw that there was always a grievance on hand.

"'Miggs is a comfort to me, whatever she may be to others,'" said the suffering Mrs. Varden.

"'She's no comfort to me,' cried Gabriel, made

bold by despair. 'She's the misery of my life. She's all the plagues of Egypt in one.'

. . . . . .

"'Oh, Doll, Doll,' said her good-natured father; 'if you ever have a husband of your own —'

"Dolly glanced at the glass.

"'Well, *when* you have,' said the locksmith, 'never faint, my darling. More domestic unhappiness comes of easy fainting, Doll, than from all the greater passions put together. Remember that, my dear, if you would be really happy, which you never can be if your husband isn't. And a word in your ear, my precious. Never have a Miggs about you!'

"With this advice he kissed his blooming daughter on the cheek."

Could anything be sweeter than *Miss Dolly,* ready and equipped for a ride to Chigwell, "in a smart little cherry-colored mantle, with a hood of the same drawn over her head, and on the top of that hood a little straw hat trimmed with cherry-colored ribbons, and worn the merest trifle on one side — just enough, in short, to make it the wickedest and most provoking head-dress that ever malicious milliner devised. And not to speak of the manner in which those cherry-colored decorations brightened her eyes, or vied with her lips, or shed a new bloom on her face; she wore such a cruel little muff, and such a heart-rending pair of shoes, and was so surrounded and hemmed in, as it were,

by aggravations, that when Mr. Tappertit (the apprentice) holding the horse's head, saw her come out of the house alone," he felt very much like running away with her, for the tiny little apprentice was in love — be it known — with *Miss Dolly Varden,* who cared no more for him than for a fly upon the ceiling. *Miss Dolly,* moreover, was going for a ride with her father and mother, and naturally she must look her prettiest, for there were people to be met upon the road.

"The chaise creaked upon its springs, and Mrs. Varden was inside; and now it creaked again, and more than ever, and the blacksmith was inside; and now it bounded once as if its heart beat lightly, and Dolly was inside; and now it was gone and its place was empty, and he (Tappertit) and that dreary Miggs were standing in the street together."

Little *Dolly* worked into the story by means of a letter which she was to deliver to the heroine, *Miss Emma Haredale,* at the Warren, the *Haredale's* home, some distance from the Maypole, the inn kept by *John Willet,* where the *Vardens* stopped for dinner. And here we understand the reason of the cherry-colored ribbons and the bewitching tip-tilted hat, for *Joe Willet,* the son of the fat landlord, was undeniably fond of cherry ribbons and *Dolly,* while *Dolly* herself — well, she liked big, honest, open-hearted, handsome young fellows like *Joe,* and while it was very dreadful to be waylaid in the gathering gloom, by the rough

and surly *Hugh,* and have one's bracelet and a very precious letter stolen, it was very delightful to discover that rescue was near at hand in the person of *Joe* himself — to run to him and fling herself into the shelter of his strong arms. Pretty, charming *Dolly Varden!*

Dickens had a portrait of her and of *Kate Nickleby* hanging in his study, but even without such a reminder *Dolly* would live in our memory through the very care with which Dickens himself has painted her.

The "Dolly Varden" style of dress was very much the fashion years ago when our mothers were young. The plain petticoat, over which was draped the flowered muslin or brocade, in full panniers on either side of the slender hips; the square-cut bodice with its full ruching, through which the white neck gleamed; and the elbow sleeves with the fall of a soft ruffle were very bewitching, and if the wearer chanced to be young and pretty — then hail to the memory of *Dolly Varden!*

Dickens's best and prettiest heroines were small. The tall ladies in his books usually ran to bone and ugliness, and, with few exceptions, they were intensely disagreeable. And, though Charles Dickens, at the time of the writing of "Barnaby Rudge," was a very young father of two very little girls, he had a very definite notion of what a proper little girl should look like when she lengthened her

dresses and put up her curls — and the picture of *Dolly* and *Emma Haredale* is a charming bit of contrast and color.

"They strolled up and down the terrace walks, talking incessantly — at least, Dolly never left off once — and making that quarter of the sad and mournful house quite gay. Not that they talked loudly or laughed much, but they were both so very handsome, and it was such a breezy day, that their light dresses and dark curls appeared so free and joyous in their abandonment, and Emma was so fair and Dolly so rosy, and Emma so delicately shaped, and Dolly so plump, and, in short, there are no flowers for any garden like such flowers, let horticulturists say what they may, and both house and garden seemed to know it, and to brighten up sensibly."

Perhaps the greatest contrast after all was between pretty *Dolly* and *Miss Miggs,* better known as *Miggs* in the bosom of the *Varden* household. *Dolly* was turned seventeen, a favorite age with Dickens, and *Miggs* (let us be charitable) was doubtless ten years her senior — the slender, attenuated female of the type the novelist loved to caricature. Unconscious little *Dolly* had inspired a mad passion in the breast of *Master Simon Tappertit,* her father's apprentice; *Miss Miggs* had a secret passion for *Simon,* and consequently a secret dislike of poor little *Dolly.* Now the little *Dolly* of seventeen grew, in the course of five years,

to be twenty-two, and, though there were lovers by the score, the saucy minx would have none of them.

This same *Dolly Varden,* lovelier than ever, " was so whimsical and hard to please, that she was Dolly Varden still, all smiles and dimples and pleasant looks, and caring no more for the fifty or sixty young fellows who at that very moment were breaking their hearts to marry her, than if so many oysters had been crossed in love and opened afterward." *Dolly,* indeed, had grown from child to woman, and big, handsome *Joe Willet* had been away near five years before she found out how much of her heart had gone with him.

Miss Miggs was still faithful to the little apprentice, who turned out to be a very war-like character in the course of the story. *Miss Miggs* had many peculiarities: she always spoke in plurals, and turned on, at unexpected moments, the fount which supplied her ready tears. The following words, punctuated with sobs and tears, is an example of *Miggs's* methods. She said " She knowed that master hated her. That it was a dreadful thing to live in families that have dislikes and not give satisfactions. That to make divisions was a thing she could not abear to think of, neither could her feelings let her do it. That if it was master's wishes she and him should part, it was best they should part, and she hoped he might be the happier for it, and always wishes him well,

and that he might find somebody as would meet his dispositions. It would be a hard trial to part from such a missis, but she could meet any suffering when her conscience told her she was in the rights, and therefore she was willing even to go that lengths. She did not think, she added, that she could survive the separations, but as she was hated and looked upon unpleasant, perhaps her dying as soon as possible would be the best endings for all parties. With this affecting conclusion, Miss Miggs shed more tears, and sobbed abundantly."

Later, when the locksmith's house was besieged by the rioters, *Miss Miggs* it was who, from an upper window, called out in terror, imploring them "to have pity on her sex's weaknesses."

Dickens was much interested in the illustrations of *Master Humphrey's Clock,* which covered the two stories —"The Old Curiosity Shop" and "Barnaby Rudge"— the work of which was done by George Cattermole and Hablot K. Browne. Mr. Cattermole married a distant cousin of Dickens, and consequently the letters exchanged between them are somewhat intimate in tone.

"I want to know," Dickens writes, "if you feel ravens in general and would fancy Barnaby's raven in particular. Barnaby being an idiot, my notion is to have him always in company with a pet raven who is immeasurably more knowing than himself. To this end I have been studying my bird, and

think I could make a very queer character of him. Should you like the subject when this raven makes his first appearance?"

"My dear George:" he writes again.

"Here is a subject for the next number; the next to that I hope to send you the MS. of, very early in the week, as the best opportunities for illustration are all coming off now and we are in the thick of the story."

Here he gives an account of the rioters burning and plundering in the countryside around Maypole Inn, and the destruction of the Warren, the home of the *Haredales,* which was to be illustrated, and for which he gave many valuable suggestions, for he was one writer who understood the real need of pictures in literature, something that appealed to the eye as well as to the "mind's eye." And the artists who worked so zealously had no easy time of it, because they had to be mechanics as well, and be able to transfer their drawings onto blocks of wood prepared for the purpose; this was in itself an art called wood-cutting, and very rough and crude work it looks compared with the wonderful illustrations of to-day. There were certain rules about light and shade which were very hard to follow in wood-cutting, hence most of the pictures in Dickens's time, looked staringly black and white, because the various "washes" and "tones" which we have to-day to soften things were not heard of then.

Here is another suggestion:

"My dear George:

"When Hugh and a small body of the rioters, cut off from the Warren, beckoned to their pals, they forced into a very remarkable postchaise Dolly Varden and Emma Haredale, and bore them away with all possible rapidity; one of their company driving, the rest running beside the chaise, climbing up behind, sitting on the top, lighting the way with their torches, &c, &c. If you can express the women inside without showing, as by a fluttering veil, a delicate arm, or so forth appearing at the half-closed window — so much the better."

Again he writes:

"Firstly. Will you design upon a block of wood Lord George Gordon alone and very solitary in his prison in the Tower? The chamber as ancient as you please and after your own fancy; the time, evening; the season, summer.

"Secondly. Will you ditto upon ditto, a sword duel between Mr. Haredale and Mr. Chester, in a grove of trees?" (Then follows a graphic description of the duel.)

"Thirdly. Will you conceive and execute, after your own fashion, a frontispiece for 'Barnaby'?

"Fourthly. Will you also devise a subject representing 'Master Humphrey's Clock' as stopped; his chair by the fireside, empty; his crutch against the wall; his slippers on the cold hearth;

his hat upon the chair back; the MSS. of 'Barnaby' and 'The Curiosity Shop' heaped upon the table; and the flowers you introduced in the first subject of all, withered and dead? Master Humphrey being supposed to be no more."

So we see, by these fragments from the letters, of what help he was to the men who worked for him and how his imagination colored theirs.

Concerning the other historical novel, "A Tale of Two Cities," written, as we know, nearly twenty years after "Barnaby," there seems to be one general opinion — that it is Dickens's masterpiece. Dickens, the man, had lived through much in the interim; his children — nine living ones — had sprung up about him; he was a man of consequence and of established fame; the great acknowledged his greatness; the small looked up to him. He had only to place about the guillotine and the Terror and the Revolutionary mob his own dramatic version, to make this masterpiece, and who was better fitted to do this thing than he!

No title more appropriate could have been chosen for a story —"A Tale of Two Cities"— Paris and London — always London in every tale he wrote — never Paris before. He read Carlyle's French Revolution, he saw Carlyle's Paris, and he wrote about it in Dickens's style, with the result that to the girls of the present day Carlyle's French Revolution is comparatively unknown, while Dickens's

"Tale of Two Cities" still holds and enthralls them.

Girls turn naturally to heroism; so *Sydney Carton* — sinner though he is — appeals to them in the grand climax of the story. To be willing to die as he did — to be able to rise to such a height, seems to them the highest goal of greatness. Justice or injustice dealt death in "Barnaby Rudge," but it was ignominious death — the death of the rabble for a lost cause — while gentlemen died in Paris for no cause at all.

There was only one girl in the whole story, *Lucie Manette,* a strangely white, pure figure flitting through the horror of the times, very young and very lovely. She was only seventeen when the story opens, and *Mr. Jarvis Lorry* met her in Dover. When he saw her first she was standing "in a riding cloak and still holding her straw travelling hat by its ribbon in her hand. As his eyes rested on a short, slight, pretty figure, a quantity of golden hair, a pair of blue eyes that met his own with an inquiring look, and a forehead with a singular capacity (remembering how young and smooth it was) of lifting and knitting itself into an expression that was not quite one of perplexity, or wonder, or alarm, or merely of a bright fixed attention, though it included all the four expressions — as his eyes rested on these things, a sudden vivid likeness passed before him, of a child whom he had held in his arms on the passage across

that very channel one cold time, when the hail drifted heavily, and the sea ran high."

Such was *Lucie Manette,* and all through her many trials we meet the bright presence. Like all of Dickens's choice young heroines, she was small, and even twenty years or more had not the power to make the author forget that Mary Hogarth died at the age of seventeen.

It is beautiful to see how, through all his triumph, Dickens honored the memory of this dead girl. There is scarcely one among the many girls whom he has made his heroines who does not in some way bear resemblance to this ideal of his.

Lucie's companion — the background against which her fair young figure stood out in bright relief — was a tall, spare woman by the name of *Miss Pross.* "A wild-looking woman, whom even in his agitation, Mr. Lorry observed to be all of a red color, and to have red hair, and to be dressed in some extraordinary tight-fitting fashion, and to have on her head a most wonderful bonnet like a Grenadier wooden measure, and a good measure, too, or a great Stilton Cheese, came running into the room in advance of the inn servants [*Mr. Lorry* had called for help, for *Lucie* was in a faint], and soon settled the question of his detachment from the poor young lady by laying a brawny hand upon his chest, and sending him flying back against the nearest wall.

"'I really think this must be a man!' was Mr.

Lorry's breathless reflection, simultaneously with his coming against the wall."

Miss Pross was not a man, but a gentle, tender woman when the time came for gentleness and tenderness — a man only when it came to saving her young mistress from the clutches of the guillotine; none but Dickens could have drawn such a character, such a mixture of fun and pathos, of sentiment and common-sense! In truth, *Miss Pross* will live with many another spinster of his drawing, only this one had a heart of gold.

But we are looking twenty years ahead at this "Tale of Two Cities." After the writing of "Barnaby Rudge," the author's restless mind was filled with quite another vision. Murmurs had reached him from America — invitations had poured in upon him. His natural vanity had been touched only recently by a triumphal visit to Scotland, with his wife. We must remember that he had the soul of the people, he had done good work, but he loved above all things — praise and acclamation. The Americans were calling him and so — he went to America.

PART III.

THE BOOKS THAT MADE THE MAN.

CHAPTER IX.

DICKENS AND AMERICA.

N December 16, 1841, Dickens wrote the following letter from Devonshire Terrace to little Mary Talfourd, a daughter of one of his most intimate friends:

"My dear Mary:

"I should be delighted to come and dine with you on your birthday and be as merry as I wish you to be always; but as I am going within a few days afterward, a very long distance from home, and shall not see any of my children [he had four then — two girls and two boys] for six long months, I have made up my mind to pass all that week at home for their sakes; just as you would like your papa and mamma to spend all the time they could possibly spare with you, if they were about to make a dreary voyage to America; which is what I am going to do myself.

"But, though I cannot come to see you on that day, you may be sure I shall not forget that it is your birthday, and that I shall drink your health and many happy returns in a glass of wine, filled

as full as it will hold. And I shall dine at half-past five myself, so that we may both be drinking our wine at the same time; and I shall tell my Mary (for I have got a daughter of the same name, but she is a very small one as yet) to drink your health, too, and we shall try and make believe that you are here, or that we are in Russell Square, which is the best thing we can do, I think, under the circumstances.

"You are growing up so fast that by the time I come home again, I expect you will be almost a woman; and in a very few years we shall be saying to each other, 'Don't you remember what the birthdays used to be in Russell Square?' and 'How strange it seems!' and 'How quickly time passes!' and all that sort of thing, you know. But I shall always be very glad to be asked on your birthday, and to come if you will let me, and to send my love to you, and to wish that you may live to be very old and very happy, which I do now with all my heart.

"Believe me always,
"My dear Mary,
"Yours affectionately,
"Charles Dickens."

Truly a charming letter from a busy man to a little girl of whom he must have been very fond, and she must have been quite accustomed to his

signature, for it was very queer and not at all readable, with a great big flourish beneath it.

His four children, Charles, Mary, Kate, and Walter Landor, a baby boy not more than a year old, were left in the care of Mr. and Mrs. Macready (the famous actor and his wife), and Mr. and Mrs. Dickens and their maid, Anne, sailed from Liverpool on January 4, 1842, on the steamship *Britannia,* followed by the good wishes and hearty farewells of many friends. Thomas Hood, the poet and humorist, composed a couple of clever verses to express his sentiments:

Pshaw! away with leaf and berry,
And the sober-sided cup!
Bring a Goblet, and bright Sherry!
And a bumper fill me up.
Tho' I had a pledge to shiver,
And the largest ever was,
Ere his vessel leaves our river,
I will drink a health to Boz!

Here's success to all his antics,
Since it pleases him to roam,
And to paddle o'er Atlantics,
After such a *sale* at home!
May he shun all rocks whatever,
And the shallow sand that lurks,
And the *Passage* be as clever
As the best among his works!

We must not forget that a voyage across the Atlantic seventy years ago was not only fraught

with considerable danger in the winter time, but usually took about three weeks to accomplish. The *Britannia,* being an excellent ship, sighted land on the eighteenth day out from Liverpool, after an exceptionally stormy voyage.

The *Britannia* was a Cunard liner carrying only about seventy passengers, which was considered quite a wonderful number; but, when we compare those early ships with the ocean palaces now afloat, we wonder at the ideas of comfort in those days. Dickens wrote to his friend, Mr. Thomas Mitton, just before sailing from Liverpool:

"My dear Mitton:

"This is a short note, but I will fulfil the adage and make it a merry one.

"We came down in great comfort. Our luggage is now aboard. Anything so utterly and monstrously absurd as the size of our cabin, 'no gentleman of England who lives at home at ease' can for a moment imagine. Neither of the portmanteaus would go into it. There! These Cunard packets are not very big you know actually, but the quantity of sleeping-berths makes them much smaller, so that the saloon is not nearly so large as in one of the Ramsgate boats. The ladies' cabin is so close to ours that I could knock the door without getting off something they call my bed, but which I believe to be a muffin beaten flat. This is a great comfort, for it is an excellent room (the

only good one in the ship); and if there be only one other lady besides Kate, as the stewardess thinks, I hope I shall be able to sit there very often.

"They talk of seventy passengers, but I can't think there will be so many; they talk besides (which is even more to the purpose) of a very fine passage, having had a noble one this time last year. God send it so! We are in the best spirits and full of hope. I was dashed for a moment when I saw our 'cabin,' but I got over that directly and laughed so much at its ludicrous proportions that you might have heard me all over the ship."

"That this state-room," Dickens tells us in his "American Notes," "had been especially engaged for 'Charles Dickens Esquire, and Lady' was rendered sufficiently clear, even to my seared intellect, by a very small manuscript announcing the fact, which was pinned on a very flat quilt, covering a very thin mattress, spread like a surgical plaster on a most inaccessible shelf."

These innocent, comfortable English folk, fond of lounging and taking their ease when it was time to rest, had built a regular castle-in-the-air concerning the possibilities of a steamer "cabin"— but this little hole in the ship was rather overwhelming; yet it was the very best cabin in the very fastest steamer that plied the ocean.

The voyage across was rough, and there were many times when the vessel and the passengers

were in grave danger; the sea was high, and everything was pitching and tumbling before they had been out a day. "Two passengers' wives (one of them my own) lay already in silent agonies on the sofa; and one lady's maid (*my* lady's) was a mere bundle on the floor — execrating her destiny and pounding her curl-papers among the stray boxes. Everything sloped the wrong way. . . . I had left the door open in the bosom of a gentle declivity, and when I turned to shut it, it was on the summit of a lofty eminence."

Indeed, the ship rocked so that Dickens was forced to take refuge in his bed, occasionally staggering upon deck to get a breath of air — never sick, but always on the verge. He says of seasickness: "My own opinion is that whether one is discreet or indiscreet (in eating) . . . on the eve of a sea voyage, is a matter of little consequence, and that to use a common phrase —'it comes to very much the same thing in the end.'"

On the third morning out at sea, they shipped volumes of water in their cabin, and had the pleasure of seeing everything turned upside-down. He writes:

"I am awakened out of my sleep by a dismal shriek from my wife, who demands to know whether there's any danger. I rouse myself and look out of bed. The water jug is plunging and leaping like a lively dolphin; all the smaller articles are afloat except my shoes, which are stranded on a

carpet-bag, high and dry like a couple of coal-barges. Suddenly I see them spring into the air, and behold the looking-glass, which is nailed to the wall, sticking fast upon the ceiling. At the same time the door entirely disappears and a new one is opened in the floor. Then I begin to comprehend that the state-room is standing on its head."

Such pitching could not occur in these days. The vessels are planned more with an eye to personal comfort. There are no water-jugs to play queer pranks, and the steamship of to-day may well be named the ocean greyhound, so rapidly and with such little motion does she travel.

But the mere discomforts of a rolling ship were as nothing compared with the heavy winds and gales which at times threatened destruction. So terrified and unnerved were some of the passengers that even when land was sighted they refused to believe it — thinking that they were shipwrecked and the officers were afraid to tell them; it was only when one of the boats brought back a tall young tree, plucked up by the roots, that they calmed down and seemed satisfied.

They stopped at Halifax first to deliver the mail, and then they pushed on for Boston harbor, which they entered on January 22, thanks to the gallant handling of the ship by Captain Hewett. On the day before landing, the passengers — headed by the Earl of Mulgrave and Charles Dickens — tendered him a public testimonial, and a subscription

was raised for a piece of plate, to be inscribed with the lasting gratitude of the passengers, and as a tribute to his nautical skill.

From the moment he set foot in America, Dickens was the center of the most overwhelming enthusiasm and hospitality. From city to city his was a progress of triumph. Even sovereigns could not have commanded greater public notice. Crowds followed his carriage, crowds cheered him in the theaters. They gave him public dinners and balls, they entertained him privately, he had the freedom of the towns. In short, we Americans, always prone to overdo things, would have spoiled the best in Dickens, had he been just an ordinary man; but fortunately his stay in Boston brought him in contact with some of the best minds in the country, and his own mind — always on the alert for information — sought out those things in the big city which best ministered to the wants of the people.

First among the places he visited was the Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind, in which he took a keen interest. Laura Bridgman — the famous blind girl who was also deprived of hearing, taste, and smell — was in the institution at the time, her wonderful mind expanding under Dr. Howe's careful treatment.

Dickens was much interested in this girl, and also in a boy affected in the same way, and whom good Dr. Howe, with Laura Bridgman's assistance, was

leading along the same path. This sort of thing impressed a mind like Dickens's — always sensitive to every human need and affliction. What would he have said had he been here to-day to see Helen Keller and hear of the magic accomplished in her case, and to know the lovely spirit of the girl, and to read her wonderful book!

Dickens was only seeing America in its childhood, it had enjoyed but a little over half a century of independence. Many of its people had been pioneers in virgin countries, and many little roughnesses of pioneer life still clung to them. He forgot this in writing his "American Notes," and his pointed allusions to the "typical American" gave serious offense. He seemed to forget, too, that he had been the honored guest of these people, and would have been horrified had anyone suggested that he had abused their hospitality. But such was the case; he criticized them at every point — from the way they chewed tobacco to the way they treated their slaves. The question of slavery was beginning to burn fiercely between the North and the South; but Dickens, as an outsider and an Englishman to boot, unwisely "put his finger in the pie." So it was natural that both sides resented his interference in the quarrel. There were besides unflattering criticisms on many other subjects which might have been left unsaid. He himself says in closing the book:

"I have little reason to believe, from certain

warnings I have had since I returned to England, that it (the book) will be tenderly or favorably received by the American people; and as I have written the Truth in relation to the mass of those who form their judgments and express their opinions, it will be seen that I have no desire to court . . . the popular applause."

There was much praise given in his book to our public institutions, and our best and brightest public men clustered around him. But for years American people resented his coming among them as he did, and taking back with him some very warped ideas, which he published as typical facts.

Niagara impressed him more than anything he saw. He paints the greatness and the splendor of it as only his pen can paint. His eyes saw everything, but he tells us humorously that Anne, their stolid maid, he verily believed, never even saw an American tree. "She never looks at a prospect by any chance, or displays the smallest emotion at any sight whatever. She objects to Niagara that 'it's nothing but water,' and considers that 'there is too much of that.'"

At Montreal he had a queer experience; in a letter to his brother-in-law, Henry Austin, he says:

"I suppose you have heard that I am going to act at the Montreal theater with the officers? Farce-books being scarce, I have selected Keeley's part in 'Two O'clock in the Morning.' I wrote yesterday to Mitchell, the actor and manager at

New York, to get and send me a comic wig, light flaxen, with a small whisker half-way down the cheek; over this I mean to wear two night-caps, one with a tassel and one of flannel; a flannel wrapper, drab tights and slippers will complete the costume."

There were two other farces the same night, "A Roland for an Oliver" and "Deaf as a Post"—in each of which Dickens took a prominent part.

He was boyishly proud of himself over this exploit, assuming, besides, the stage management of the entire entertainment, and acting so well in the comedy rôles assigned to him that the packed theater was in a roar from beginning to end. Even Mrs. Dickens was induced to take part in the performance, and Dickens admitted that she played remarkably well.

There was one serious object which Dickens had in view from the time he first considered the possibility of a visit to America. He wished to strike a blow for a copyright law which would protect writers on both sides of the ocean. In a famous speech delivered in New York, he expressed himself very plainly, and created much excitement. For, having suffered from the pirates at home, he came down upon all such offenders with needless severity, though many of his views were upheld by the best Americans in the country, and by the most notable men in England.

In those six months of travel, there was no phase

of American life, North, East, South or West, which escaped this traveler's notice. So much was crowded into the busy days and still busier nights that when the prospect of home and children began to loom in sight, the hungry father and mother could hardly wait for the happy day of sailing.

They took passage for England in the *George Washington,* sailing from New York on June 7, and three tired, happy people were on deck as she swung out of the harbor, the young novelist and his wife, and the stolid, imperturbable Anne, who had gone through the trial without the crack of an accidental smile.

There was an addition to the party in the shape of a small dog, which his friend Mitchell had been rearing for him, having christened him "Boz." He was a white Havana spaniel, and, from the time of his first voyage, always accompanied the family on their many jaunts. He died at last of extreme old age. When safe in England, Dickens rechristened him "Mr. Snittle Timbery"—and he was thereafter known by the abbreviated name of "Timber." Dickens, whose fondness for dogs was celebrated, soon had him in training, and he was at an early age taught to jump over a stick at word of command, besides performing other and more wonderful feats.

There was great rejoicing over the return of the wanderers. No one knew the exact date of their expected coming, so, when the party walked in

upon their family, one of the boys was so shocked with the surprise and joy of meeting that he fell into the most alarming convulsions, though up to that time he had been in perfect health. He soon recovered, however, as Dickens writes in a letter to a friend. How he enjoyed those days of reunion with his children! He was a perfect boy among them, and immediately proceeded to invent new nicknames for each one.

In a postscript of a letter to his brother-in-law, Henry Austin, he writes:

"The children's present names are as follows:

"Katey (from a lurking propensity to fieryness) Lucifer Box.

"Mamey (as generally descriptive of her bearing) Mild Glo'ster.

"Charley (as a corruption of Master Toby) Flaster Floby.

"Walter (suggested by his high cheek-bones) Young Skull. Each is pronounced with a peculiar howl which I shall have great pleasure in illustrating."

Dickens brought back from the new world many pleasant memories and warm friendships. Foremost among his friends were Washington Irving and Professor Felton, Bryant, Halleck, Dana, also a host of others in every walk of life, for Dickens from early boyhood was a cordial, genial soul and of a cheerful temper that made friends at every turn.

Now that he was safe at home, his mind once more became absorbed in his writing. "American Notes" were published in 1842. He was then ready for a larger task, and "Martin Chuzzlewit" began to take shape. It took a long time to grow, the title being the hardest thing to decide. He thought of *Martin* instantly but hesitated over half a dozen surnames, selecting *Chuzzlewit* at last. It was issued in twenty monthly parts, and on the original wrappers this inscription appears:

"The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit, his Relatives, Friends and Enemies, comprising all his Wills and his Ways; with an Historical Record of What he Did, and What he Didn't; showing, moreover, Who inherited the Family Plate, Who came in for the Silver Spoons, and Who for the Wooden Ladles. The Whole forming a Complete Key to the House of Chuzzlewit. Edited by 'Boz,' With Illustrations by 'Phiz.'"

The book came out in twenty monthly numbers, beginning January, 1843, the final double number appearing in July, 1844. The book, besides being an interesting story, was chiefly remarkable for the creation of *Mr. Pecksniff,* one of the most delightfully real old hypocrites that the world has ever known. It was even hinted that the gentleman bore a marked resemblance to Sir Robert Peel, the eminent English statesman, though many found a distinct likeness to Samuel Carter Hall, editor of the *Art Journal,* who was always pompously appeal-

ing to *hand, head,* and *heart,* which *Punch* took up in a spirit of fun and paraphrased into *" gloves, hat,* and *waistcoat."*

The story is called " Martin Chuzlzewit " because Dickens always felt the need of a young hero around whom to weave a network of events dipping far back into the past. *Martin* was a young fellow with few friends in the world, but circumstances and *Mr. Pecksniff* caught him in their toils and made a man of him. The history of the *Chuzzlewit* family is far from fair, their record far from clean; yet *Martin* seems free from all outward taint — unless it were that of selfishness.

A host of substantial figures pass before us in the reading of " Martin Chuzzlewit," all in a certain way suggesting some vice or virtue.

First, of course, are *Mr. Pecksniff* and his two daughters, *Charity* and *Mercy,* named after the cardinal virtues, which *Mr. Pecksniff* was supposed to possess — called in playfulness by their parent, *Cherry* and *Merry. Miss Cherry* interests us not at all; she was a young woman who was born old — probably she was in her early twenties when *Martin* was first introduced to the *Misses Pecksniff* — but she was one of those gaunt females of whom Dickens loved to make caricatures, and at whose age one could make no possible guess.

But not so laughing little *Merry,* with the clustering curls. She was the sunshine of the House of *Pecksniff,* which, by the way, was distantly re-

lated to the House of *Chuzzlewit*. She had plump white shoulders, sparkling eyes, and a vivacious manner, that for so young a girl seemed almost unnatural. She was probably not more than seventeen, and all her little affectations of manner made her seem even younger than she was.

Cherry was supposed to represent the calmness of wisdom in the *Pecksniff* household; *Merry* was the little bubbling fountain of youth, irrepressible, laughing always, whether it was at *Martin* or *Tom Pinch* or that worst of villains, *Jonas Chuzzlewit,* whom fate had set aside for her lord and master — poor little *Merry!* There came a time when she did not laugh so much. There is nothing more pathetic than the slow crushing of the spirit of a young girl. *Merry's* perpetual laugh was very irritating when we felt that it was put on for the occasion, but when she became *Mrs. Jonas Chuzzlewit* we missed the pretty bird-like airs and graces, and it was then that we began to love and feel sorry for the *Merry* that had been.

Dickens is always most particular in describing homes, and we can tell at once, from a peep into the *Pecksniff's* establishment, what strained, unnatural lives these two girls must have led. Their mother, poor soul, had gone early to her reward, and their father — a canting, drunken old hypocrite — lived by cheating. He cajoled young men to come into his home with the laudable purpose of studying architecture under his guidance. He

charged them enormously, and if after a certain time they did not happen to be smitten by the charms of either of his daughters, they were turned adrift without ceremony, and certainly without the substantial fee which the unsuspecting pupil was made to pay in advance.

In describing *Mr. Pecksniff,* Dickens tells us: "It would be no description of Mr. Pecksniff's gentleness of manner to say that he looked at this moment as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth. He rather looked as if any quantity of butter might have been made out of him, by churning the milk of human kindness, as it spouted upwards from his heart."

How could girls brought up in such an atmosphere be real girls! They were taught early to play into their father's hands, and when it was *Merry* and not *Cherry,* whom the fascinating *Jonas* at last selected as his wife, there was a terrible scene between the two loving sisters. The bargain was that *Mr. Jonas* was to bear off *Miss Cherry* as a matrimonial prize, but he liked "the other one" best, though she laughed at him and flouted him, and tossed her curls coquettishly.

There was another girl in the book, sweet *Ruth Pinch,* and here we have one of the dearest girls in story. She was a very old-fashioned girl — was little *Ruth Pinch,* and proud and happy when fate threw her and her dearly-loved *Brother Tom* together in grimy old London. What matter that

they had both lost their positions; they had each other, and youth, and health, and both had perfect dispositions with the power to make everyone happy with whom they came in contact.

It was pleasant to see *Ruth* flying around their poor little home, doing a hundred little girlish things to make it seem like home, and looking withal so distractingly pretty that *Tom,* unaccustomed to anything better than *Mr. Pecksniff's* daughters, followed her about delightedly, and it was the simplest thing that big *John Westlock* should fall head over ears in love with her the moment he saw her.

It was a pretty pastoral romance in the heart of a busy city, though for a long time it seemed uncertain which little *Ruth* loved best, *Brother Tom* or *John Westlock.* Every afternoon *Ruth* was on hand to meet her brother and walk with him through the Fountain Court, that is, when *Tom* found a position, which he did without delay, but on one occasion, " either she was a little too soon, or Tom was a little too late — she was so precise in general that she timed it to half a minute — but no Tom was there. Well! But was anybody else there that she blushed so deeply after looking round, and tripped off down the steps with such unusual expedition?

" Why, the fact is, that Mr. Westlock was passing at that moment. The Temple is a public thoroughfare . . . and Mr. Westlock had as good

a right to be there as anybody else. But why did she run away then? Not being ill-dressed, for she was much too neat for that, why did she run away? The brown hair that had fallen down beneath her bonnet, and had one impertinent imp of a flower clinging to it, boastful of its license before all men, *that* could not have been the cause, for it looked charming. Oh! foolish, panting, frightened little heart, why did she run away!

" . . . merrily the tiny fountain played, and merrily the dimples sparkled on its sunny face. John Westlock hurried after her. Softly the whispering water broke and fell, and roguishly the dimples twinkled, as he stole upon her footsteps.

" Oh, foolish, panting, timid little heart, why did she feign to be unconscious of his coming? Why wish herself so far away, yet be so flutteringly happy there! "

No prettier love-making has Dickens ever written. The truth was, he himself fell in love with every pretty, dainty little girl of his creation.

The happy love of *Ruth* and *John Westlock,* the serene, beautiful character of *Tom Pinch,* the bubbling, cheerful goodness of *Mark Tapley,* are the bright spots in a very dark and somber tale. There are certain humorous characters that we can never forget. *Sairey Gamp,* for instance, and *Betsey Prig,* with their fat, bloated faces and red noses and ponderous shapes, and the fictitious *Mrs. Harris* — who had no shape at all. There is

Todgers boarding-house, where the *Pecksniffs* stopped when in London; there is *Bailey,* the dirty little "boots," and *Mr. Mould,* the famous undertaker. But Dickens, still smarting under American displeasure, sent young *Martin* and *Mark Tapley* to America, to say some more sharp (and alas! true) things about that wild, fever-ridden country, where the two adventurers found themselves. "Martin Chuzzlewit," it is true, proved to be one of the author's greatest novels, but we cannot help missing a certain sunny mood which crept through even the most serious of his writings.

He was only thirty-two on the completion of the story, but already the cares of an increasing family were writing their lines upon his handsome face. His third son and fifth child, Francis Jeffreys, was born in January, 1844; the problem of living, just at that time, was a serious one, for money difficulties were confronting him, and it became necessary to take his whole family for a while to the Continent, where the cost of living was so much less. He said to one of his friends: "I am quite serious and sober when I say that I have very grave thoughts of keeping my whole menagerie in Italy three years."

The last number of "Martin Chuzzlewit" was finished in June, and in July the novelist and his wife, his sister-in-law, and all the children, like little steps — from sturdy Charles to Baby Francis — set out for sunny Italy, where, from a land of

perpetual summer and bright skies, went forth a tale of Christmas — in dingy London, amid wind and fog and hail and snow — a tale which made the world wonder, for the hundredth time, at the magic of his art.

CHAPTER X.

THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS.

UITE a fat little book might be made of all that Dickens has to say about Christmas. The season meant so much to him — his own nature was so generous in giving out its light and warmth to those who lacked these things that his mighty pen has written of Christmas in a way to be remembered through all time.

"There are people," he writes, "who will tell you that Christmas is not to them what it used to be; that each succeeding Christmas has found some cherished hope, or happy prospect of the year before, dimmed or passed away. That the present only serves to remind them . . . of the feasts they once bestowed on hollow friends, and of the cold looks that meet them now in adversity or misfortune. Never heed such dismal reminiscences. . . . Do not select the merriest day of the three hundred and sixty-five for your doleful recollections, but draw your chair nearer the blazing fire, fill the glass, and send round the song."

This is what Dickens always did when he was one of the original "Little Dickenses," when he was

a struggling young fellow with no hope beyond the work nearest at hand, and now, when he was the famous father of other "Little Dickenses," this same Christmas spirit was always with him in its proper season.

"A Christmas family party!" he writes. "We know nothing in nature more delightful. There seems a magic in the very name of Christmas. Petty jealousies and discords are forgotten; social feelings are awakened in bosoms to which they have long been strangers. . . . Would that Christmas lasted the whole year through (as it ought)."

Now, of course, our good friend Charles Dickens was only speaking of the spirit of Christmas. To be obliged to celebrate it every day, with turkey, plum-pudding, and sweets, would not only spoil one's digestion but would grow very tiresome into the bargain. No girl, nor boy, either, for that matter, though his appetite may be unfailing, could live up to the standard of Christmas every day. What Dickens really meant was what he said in that wonderful allegory called "A Christmas Carol":

"I will honor Christmas in my heart. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me, I will not shut out the lessons that they teach."

This is the final statement of the subdued and chastened *Ebenezer Scrooge,* who, before he saw the Ghosts of Christmas, was heard to exclaim, "If

I could work my will, every idiot who goes about with ' Merry Christmas ' on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding and buried with a stake of holly run through his heart. He should!"

The "Christmas Carol" was a story that just "happened." Dickens was deep in "Martin Chuzzlewit" at the time it popped into his head, and it stayed there so persistently that he could not drive it out. Many a night he walked the streets of London, traversing miles in a state of restless excitement, as the beautiful scheme of the story unfolded itself, like the petals of some perfect flower. It was written in snatches between two parts of "Martin Chuzzlewit," begun in October and finished by the end of November, 1843, quite in time to be issued for the Christmas holidays. Through "A Christmas Carol" Dickens became the pioneer of the Christmas stories. From that time, fiction writers all over the world have taken the theme and woven countless tales around it; and every year there is a great demand for such work — such demand, indeed, that a Christmas story must be completed many months — even a year or more — before publication. In Dickens's case, however, it was the first, and his publishers, dazzled by such a brilliant experiment, fairly rushed it into print. Yet, after all, what is there in the story save a man's battle with his better self! But it moved the world; men and women — girls and boys — have read and taken the lesson to heart. The story of a

selfish man to whom Christmas was "Humbug," and all kindly joys and emotions were strangers, grew in interest as the shadow of his dead partner rose before him.

Marley's Ghost was a very sensible ghost and told *Scrooge* some wholesome truths as he sat there on the other side of the fireplace, clanking his chains — truths which are known to us all, when we have time to pause and think.

Then the Spirit of the Past came, and showed him a picture of the boy he once was.

" . . . they passed through the wall and stood by an open country road with fields on either hand. The city had entirely vanished, not a vestige of it was to be seen. The darkness and the mist had vanished with it, for it was a clear, cold winter day, with snow upon the ground.

" 'Good Heavens!' said Scrooge, clasping his hands together, as he looked about him, 'I was bred in this place — I was a boy here!'

" . . . He was conscious of a thousand odors floating in the air, each one connected with a thousand thoughts, and hopes, and joys, and cares long, long forgotten. . . .

"They walked along the road; Scrooge recognized every gate, and post, and tree; until a little market-town appeared in the distance, with its bridge, its church, and winding river. Some shaggy ponies were now seen trotting towards them, with boys upon their backs, who called to other boys in

country gigs and carts, driven by farmers. All these boys were in great spirits and shouted to each other, until the broad fields were so full of merry music, that the crisp air laughed to hear it.

"'Those are but shadows of the things that have been,' said the Ghost."

Then the *Ghost* showed *Scrooge* a picture of a deserted schoolhouse, where a solitary child, neglected by his friends, was left there at Christmas time. "They went across the hall to a door at the back of the house. It opened before them and disclosed a long, bare, melancholy room, made barer still by lines of plain deal forms and desks." *Scrooge* saw here the little dream-boy of Long Ago, reading "The Arabian Nights" by the light of a feeble fire, and sometimes it was *Crusoe* or *Friday,* or the *Parrot.* How well *Scrooge* and Dickens remembered that lonely little boy.

Then came the boy's sister *Fan.*

"'I have come to bring you home, dear brother!' said the child, clapping her tiny hands. 'To bring you home, home, home!'

"'Home, little Fan?' returned the boy.

"'Yes!' said the child, brimful of glee. 'Home for good and all. Home forever and ever. Father is so much kinder than he used to be, home's like Heaven! He spoke so gently to me one dear night when I was going to bed, that I was not afraid to ask him once more if you might come home; and he said, Yes, you should, and sent me in a coach to

bring you. And you're to be a man!' said the child, opening her eyes, 'and are never to come back here; but first we're to be together all the Christmas long, and have the merriest time in all the world.'"

Then *Scrooge* saw himself as a dashing young clerk, to one jolly old *Fezziwig,* who believed in Christmas.

"'Yo ho, my boys!' said Fezziwig. 'No more work to-night. Christmas Eve, Dick, Christmas, Ebenezer! Let's have the shutters up,' cried old Fezziwig, with a sharp clap of his hands, 'before a man can say Jack Robinson!'"

They were only 'prentice lads, but they scented a dance — and how they worked!

"Clear away! There was nothing they wouldn't have cleared away, or couldn't have cleared away, with old Fezziwig looking on. It was done in a minute. Every movable was packed off as if it were dismissed from public life for evermore; the floor was swept and watered, the lamps were trimmed, fuel was heaped upon the fire, and the warehouse was as snug, and warm, and dry, and bright a ball-room as you would desire to see upon a winter's night."

Only a dance for the merry poor on this Christmas Eve which the Spirit of the Past was showing to *Scrooge;* but how real it is, and who but Dickens could paint such a picture of life and jollity and motion.

"In came a fiddler with a music-book, and went

up to the lofty desk and made an orchestra of it. . . . In came Mrs. Fezziwig, one vast, substantial smile. In came the three Miss Fezziwigs, beaming and lovable. In came the six young fellows whose hearts they broke. In came the young men and women employed in the business. In came the housemaid with her cousin, the baker. In came the cook with her brother's particular friend, the milkman. In came the boy from over the way, who was suspected of not having board enough from his master, trying to hide himself behind the girl from next door but one, who was proved to have had her ears pulled by her mistress. In they all came, one after another, some slyly, some boldly, some gracefully, some awkwardly, some pushing, some pulling; in they all came, anyhow and everyhow."

Then away they went, in a breathless whirl of fun and laughter. Our own feet keep time as we read, and we feel the rhythm and swing of this good old-fashioned dance.

Then the lonely old man saw how love had slipped through his fingers, and the Spirit showed him a picture of the girl he might have married, the wife of another, a comely matron, with a daughter like herself years ago. Here, too, it was Christmas Eve, in a bright room with its cheerful winter fire. "The noise in this room was perfectly tumultuous, for there were more children there than Scrooge in his agitated state of mind could count; and, un-

like the celebrated herd in the poem, they were not forty children conducting themselves like one, but every child conducting itself like forty."

How Dickens loved this noisy, rollicking fun of Christmas! The coming of the father, laden with packages, accompanied by a porter carrying more; the shouts of wonder and delight as each package is opened — we can almost hear them.

"The terrible announcement that the baby had been taken in the act of putting a doll's frying-pan into his mouth, and was more than suspected of having swallowed a fictitious turkey, glued on a wooden platter! The immense relief of finding this a false alarm! The joy and gratitude and ecstasy! They are all indescribable, alike. It is enough that by degrees the children and their emotions got out of the parlour, and by one stair at a time, up to the top of the house; where they went to bed and so subsided." Who but Dickens could show us these happy, tired little children toiling up the stairs, clasping their toys in their eager arms!

The Spirit of the Present, who next appeared to *Scrooge,* was a jolly, festive Giant, a Giant who held a torch like a Horn of Plenty, and who sat upon a couch or sort of throne, made of all the good things to eat that one could possibly imagine at Christmas time.

Scrooge went with this Spirit into the home of his own poor, underpaid clerk, *Bob Cratchit,* "and on the threshold the Spirit smiled, and stopped to

bless Bob Cratchit's dwelling with the sprinklings of his torch. Think of that! Bob had but fifteen 'Bob' a week himself; he pocketed on Saturdays but fifteen copies of his Christian name; and yet the Ghost of Christmas Present, blessed his four-roomed house." Which means, of course, that the *Cratchits* had the real Spirit of Christmas in their midst, no matter how poor and pinched they might be in the world's goods.

Whoever reads "A Christmas Carol" and does not love the *Cratchit* family, from *Bob* himself to *Tiny Tim,* the dear little lame boy, who when *Bob* proposed "A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!" echoed in his weak little voice, "God bless us, every one!" is hard to please.

There was no lack of children in the *Cratchit* family. *Mrs. Cratchit* herself looked sweet and motherly in her twice-turned gown and new ribbons; then there were *Martha Cratchit* and *Belinda Cratchit* and two smaller *Cratchits* and *Tiny Tim,* such a happy family, and how we love to linger among them! And oh, the things they had to eat — and how Dickens loved to spread a feast for his poor people; how they ever escaped illness after so many goodies, it is, indeed, hard to tell. He loved, too, to take his readers out of the storms and howling winds of winter, and set them down beside the cheery Christmas fire, and hold a shovelful of dancing chestnuts over the blaze, and see them puff and crack and burst. His little "Carol,"

as he called it, made a great stir, though it was only a simple, crimson-covered volume, illustrated by John Leech, with color etchings and woodcuts. Letters came to him from all over the world, for the quaint allegory found its way to the very hearts and souls of people.

"A Christmas Carol" was written after the manner of the old-fashioned Carol, in Staves instead of Chapters. He sent a copy of this newest child of his to his friend, Professor Felton, calling it a Short Story of Christmas, by Charles Dickens, "Over which Christmas Carol Charles Dickens wept, and laughed, and wept again, and excited himself in the most extraordinary manner in the composition. . . . Its success is most prodigious, and by every post, all manner of strangers write all manner of letters to him about their homes and hearths, and how this same Carol is read aloud there, and kept on a little shelf by itself. Indeed, it is the greatest success, as I am told, that this ruffian and rascal has ever achieved."

In truth, a wealth of sentiment has always clung around the "Carol." It is said that the novelist's son, Mr. Henry Fielding Dickens, reads it aloud to his family every Christmas Day, and there is certainly no Christmas Sermon ever written that has clung so to the very heartstrings of all manner of people.

The special Yule-tide which brought forth the "Carol" was a season of much celebration for

Dickens and his family, winding up with a birthday party of one of Macready's children, where Dickens and Forster amused the youngsters with all sorts of conjuring tricks, enjoying them no doubt as much as the children themselves.

But all this occurred before Dickens had definitely decided to take his family to Italy. Neither the "Carol" nor "Martin Chuzzlewit" had added what he desired to his income, and a year or more of simpler living abroad would be a great pecuniary gain. After consultation with friends, he decided to settle near Genoa, and their first halt was Albaro, a suburb of that city, which they reached in July, 1844.

Their house was called Villa di Bagnarello, described by Dickens as a "pink jail." Being brimful of associations, he would have preferred Lord Byron's old house, but alas! being uninhabitable as a home, it had been turned into a wine shop. However, they had a splendid view of Genoa and the blue waters of the Mediterranean, about which he was never tired of writing. But he was restless, his writing materials had not arrived from England, and he was never at home unless surrounded by certain accustomed objects. Until his paper and pens were laid out, his inkstand opened, and sundry little figures, which always stood on his desk, were arranged in their proper positions, he could do nothing. When this was accomplished he could settle to serious work.

He was contemplating a second Christmas book, and had the idea of "The Chimes," but the title had not yet come to his mind. In fact, just at that time he was in too restless a mood to write at all, but wandered about the streets of Genoa, studying the people and the strange customs. Here they stayed until the end of September, but some important events were crowded into those two months.

First of all, he went head foremost over a pole which had been stretched across one of the dark Genoese streets, and which he did not see, while endeavoring to escape from a very stupid party, and the result was a sharp though short attack of illness commencing with the same agonizing pain in the side from which he suffered so often as a boy. Soon after his recovery he went to Marseilles to meet his brother Frederick, and they came down together to Albaro. On the morning after their arrival, the two young men went swimming in the bay, and Frederick was nearly drowned before his brother's eyes. A fishing boat, arriving in the nick of time, just saved his life, but, as Dickens himself said: "It was a world of horror and anguish to me, crowded into four or five minutes of dreadful agitation."

And last, but not least, came a decided alteration in the young author's appearance. Hitherto his handsome, almost boyish face had been beardless, and his well-cut chin and mouth added much to his general expression, but, aping the fashion of the

Italians, he now adorned his upper lip with a mustache, or mustaches as they were called, and Dickens writes of them:

"They are charming, charming. Without them life would be a blank."

Towards the end of September he moved into a suite of rooms in the Palazzo Pechiere for the winter, just overlooking the outskirts of the city — a stately, wonderful place, with its sculptures and stone balconies and fountains, its groves of camelias and orange trees, while inside, the frescoes, many of them done by Michael Angelo, were beautiful enough to delight the eye of any artist.

But, though we might scarcely believe it, this exceedingly queer young man, with a new Christmas story seething in his mind, was longing intensely for his dear, dark London streets, where he might tramp and tramp all the night through, if so he wished — and think and think. He missed his friends, too, especially Forster, to whom he usually outlined his ideas before even setting them down on paper.

He wished to make this coming story an appeal in behalf of the poor of London, and he had a certain peculiarity in not being able to write a single line of any story until a way was cleared for the title, but it eluded him for a long time, until one morning a maddening clash of bells rose from the city of Genoa, jangling with every sort of discord to set one's teeth on edge. Instantly the title

for his book suggested itself. It was to be called "The Chimes," and should resound over England — not Genoa. Little he cared for the Genoese churches and convents where those bells hung; *his* bells should be in an old London belfry, and they should ring in a New Year for the London people — the poor people who found it hard to get work — and were constantly being "put down" by the Aldermen and the City heads.

Once armed with his title, Dickens plunged into the very heart of his story; he wrote it in a state of great mental excitement, for through its means he wished to expose a certain body of pompous men who talked a great deal about what was good for the poor, what should be done for the poor, and how the poor should be "put down," and whose useless chatter succeeded generally in driving the poor to desperation.

He divided "The Chimes" into "Quarters," as he divided the "Carol" into "Staves," and into these "Quarters" he put his whole heart and soul. When he came to the third part he felt as if he had been ill, so untiringly had he worked, and in very truth his cheeks were hollow, his eyes sunken, and his head was hot to almost fever heat, with the mental effort this writing cost him.

We all know and love the story of *Toby Veck,* the poor little shivering, ill-clad porter who held a sort of permanent stand in the very shadow of the old belfry where hung the chimes; who dared to

eat his dinner of stewed tripe on the steps of the rich *Alderman Cute,* and who was ordered away before he had half finished his meal. We love little old *Toby* from the beginning, and are sorry to see that on this New Year's Eve he has been foolish enough to believe what *Sir Joseph Bowley* and *Alderman Cute* say of poor people — that they are bad and that they all must be "put down."

Toby was often called *Trotty Veck,* because, having no overcoat, he often trotted out of his nook by the belfry and down the street to warm his thin old blood — when the day was bitterly cold or the penetrating dampness got into his old bones.

Year after year he had stood waiting for what chance work might come in his way just in the shadow of the chimes. He had grown to love the bells, to watch for their ringing, "and he very often got such a crick in his neck from staring — with his mouth wide open — at the steeple where they hung, that he was fain to take an extra trot or two, afterwards, to cure it."

Toby read a week-old daily paper and fell into a study:

"'It frightens me almost,' he said, 'I don't know what we poor people are coming to, Lord send we may be coming to something better in the New Year nigh upon us!'"

Toby was quite impressed with the idea that poor people were no good on earth, even though he

thought better when he looked into the face of his blooming daughter *Meg* and her stalwart lover, *Richard.*

Such a dear, sweet girl was *Meg,* with her beautiful eyes. "Eyes that would bear a world of looking in, before their depth was fathomed. Dark eyes which reflected back the eyes which searched them; not flashingly or at the owner's will, but with a clear, calm, honest, patient radiance, claiming kindred with that light which Heaven called into being. Eyes that were beautiful and true, and beaming with Hope; with Hope so young and fresh; with Hope so buoyant, vigorous, and bright, despite the twenty years of work and poverty on which they had looked; that they became a voice to Trotty Veck and said: 'I think we have some business here — a little!'"

Dear wholesome *Meg* meant just the sunny side of poverty, and big strong *Richard,* the laboring class that means to win — youth and health and strength to fight the battle. But *Toby* needed something out of the common to help him back into the right way of thinking.

One step in the right direction was to help someone more unfortunate than himself. So to poor, hunted-down *Will Fern* and his little daughter *Lilian,* the good little *Toby* offered the shelter of his home. But still he pondered over the words of *Alderman Cute* and *Mr. Filer,* and *Sir Joseph Bowley,* who would put the poor man down, and

somehow the clashing chimes seemed to take up the refrain —"Put 'em down, Put 'em down!" While the rich people from their lofty height preached to the poor, the following sermon:

> Oh, let us love our occupations,
> Bless the squire and his relations,
> Live upon our daily rations,
> And always know our proper stations.

Too much lonely thinking of this sort began to haunt poor *Trotty Veck*. The Chimes always clashed now out of tune, and that night — that very New Year's Eve — they called to him:

"'Toby Veck, Toby Veck, waiting for you, Toby! Toby Veck, Toby Veck, waiting for you, Toby! Come and see us, come and see us. Drag him to us, drag him to us. Haunt and hunt him, haunt and hunt him. Break his slumbers, break his slumbers! Toby Veck, Toby Veck, door open wide, Toby, Toby Veck, Toby Veck, door open wide, Toby —'"

The more he listened, the louder and more insistent came the call of the chimes, and the old porter — hatless and coatless — followed their call —"Up, up, up" the belfry stairs, "and round and round; and up, up, up; higher, higher, higher up!

. . . . . .

"This was the belfry where the ringers came. He had caught hold of one of the frayed ropes which

hung down through apertures in the open roof. At first he started, thinking it was hair; then trembled at the very thought of waking the deep Bell. The Bells themselves were higher. Higher, Trotty in his fascination, or in working out the spell upon him, groped his way. By ladder now, and toilsomely, for it was steep and not too certain holding for the feet."

All this wonderful description and much that follows is beautiful rhythmical blank verse. Most likely at the first writing, Dickens put it in verse form, as he did many passages in "The Old Curiosity Shop," and as he often did in the heat of composition, when his thoughts flowed to that measure.

The "Third Quarter" deals with the Bells and the Goblins who dwelt beneath them in their shadow. And a wonderful "quarter" it is — a bit of word painting, quite unusual even for Charles Dickens, who did and wrote unusual things. Poor little *Toby Veck,* among the grimness of it all, shuddered as the goblins flitted by him in the darkness. Children reading it to-day hold each other's hands and draw deep breaths of awe. The Bells complained that *Toby* had wronged them by mistaking their message, and *Toby* was now put through his trial under their deep-mouthed shadow.

In short, "The Chimes" preached a beautiful sermon, not only to the world of readers but to the writer himself. When he had finished the story,

he shut himself up and had "a good cry," and later he wrote to Thomas Mitton:

"I have worn myself to death, in the month I have been at work, . . . I have not been able to divest myself of the story — have suffered very much in my sleep in consequence, and am so shaken by such work in this trying climate that I am as nervous as a man who is dying of drink and as haggard as a murderer. I believe I have written a tremendous book, and knocked the 'Carol' out of the field."

He was not altogether right in this assertion. He never knocked "The Carol" out of the field — not even when he wrote "The Cricket on the Hearth," and that's saying a good deal. The beauty of "The Chimes" is for older eyes and hearts; girls and boys will laugh and cry over the other two long before they even grasp dimly at the true meaning of "The Chimes," and even we older ones are apt for "Auld lang syne" to read over and over what pleased us best in our childhood.

As for Dickens himself, he was very much elated over what he considered a beautiful piece of work, and he had a wild, boyish desire to read this masterpiece to a chosen circle of his friends, wild enough, in fact, to carry him to London for that express purpose. He wrote to John Forster suggesting an evening at Lincoln's Inn Fields (Forster's residence), and inclosing a list of the chosen spirits who he knew would enjoy the reading.

There were eleven present at this famous meeting, which Daniel Maclise has immortalized by a charming sketch of the lofty room and the distinguished company.

Dickens, seated at the large table, looked particularly young and boyish in the midst of them all. On one side of him sat Carlyle, on the other — Fox. The rest of the interested circle consisted of Forster, Gerrold, Blanchard, Frederick Dickens, Maclise, Stanfield, Dyce and Harness, all intimate friends. Such a reading as it was! He reached England on the 30th of November, and the memorable reading took place on the 2nd of December. Most of the company were in tears, for the Novelist had great power as a reader, a power which brought him much fame as he grew older. He read "The Chimes" twice in London during that brief stay of a week, then he vanished like the Spirit of Christmas to his Italian home, and "The Chimes" rang out their message to the world.

"The Cricket on the Hearth," the third of the famous Christmas Series, was not thought of until his year's sojourn in Italy had drawn to a close. He was very homesick, and was glad to settle down in Devonshire Terrace once more.

When "The Cricket" first took shape in his mind, it was in the guise of a periodical. "I would call it, sir," he said to his ever faithful friend, John Forster, "'The Cricket. A cheerful creature that chirrups on the Hearth. *Natural History.*'"

The scheme was a good one, but the year (1845) was one of disaster all over the country, so it was wisely abandoned. The story, however, began to take shape — a delicate, poetic fancy, not the outcome of the wild excitement in which "The Chimes" was conceived, but lighted by the steady glow of home life, in which Dickens always took lasting pleasure. This story was not written in such a heat; in fact, he had a number of ideas and projects in his mind, that restless, brilliant mind, that seriously interfered with anything like steady writing, but in spite of many drawbacks this "Fairy Tale of Home" was published in 1846, and brought real success to the author, more than he had counted on, more than he had imagined possible from the theme of the simple little story. He was "sick, bothered, and depressed" during the writing of it, and his many duties in all directions kept him from those long walks in which he rejoiced, and, truth to tell, it did not seem to him such a burst of inspiration as did the two others. But the great world of readers thought otherwise, and when at Christmas, 1845, "The Cricket on the Hearth" began to chirp, the blithe, cheery sound found a welcome far and near.

What matter that the tale was built upon the common things in life — among the common people. What matter that the Cricket on the Hearth had a rival in the Kettle on the Hob! What matter that the *Carrier* was only a bluff, hearty, simple fellow!

He could understand the chirp of the Cricket as well as *Mrs. Dot,* his plump and pretty little wife. Was there ever a happier household than the House of *Peerybingle,* which included the *Carrier* and his little wife and the blessed *Baby,* and *Boxer* — the dog, and *Tilly Slowboy* — the *Baby's* special attendant.

Boxer usually accompanied the *Carrier* on his rounds — (*John* was a parcel carrier, and this was Christmas) and made himself quite one of the family, . . . "now feigning to make savage rushes at his mistress, and facetiously bringing himself to sudden stops; now eliciting a shriek from Tilly Slowboy in the low nursing-chair near the fire, by the unexpected application of his moist noise to her countenance; now exhibiting an obtrusive interest in the Baby; now going round and round upon the hearth, and lying down as if he had established himself for the night; now getting up again and taking that nothing of a fag-end of that tail of his, out into the weather, as if he had just remembered an appointment and was off at a round trot to keep it."

With the Cricket chirping and the Kettle singing, and the *Carrier* just home — out of the cold, there must, of course, be a feast.

"'There! There's the tea-pot ready on the hob!' said Dot; as briskly busy as a child at play at keeping house. 'And there's the cold knuckle of ham; and there's the butter; and there's the

crusty loaf and all! Here's the clothes-basket for the small parcels, John, if you've got any there — Where are you, John? Don't let the dear child fall under the grate, Tilly, whatever you do!' "

And *Tilly Slowboy* — was there ever such a delicious bit of clumsiness as the poor little workhouse girl " whose constant astonishment at finding herself so kindly treated " was really pathetic. But *Mrs. Dot* knew that poor *Tilly* had an absent-minded way of getting the *Baby* into difficulties, occasionally knocking its head against " deal-doors, dressers, stair-rails, bedposts, and other foreign substances." *Miss Slowboy* had many of the distinguishing traits of the *Marchioness:*

" She was of a spare and straight shape, this young lady, insomuch that her garments appeared to be in constant danger of sliding off those sharp pegs, her shoulders, on which they were hung." And she had very startling ways of saying and doing unexpected things — had *Miss Slowboy,* but the *Baby* was used to her, and she was used to the *Baby,* and somehow they never came to serious grief.

There were other homes in the story, not quite so happy or so cheerful, poor old *Caleb Plummer's,* for instance.

" Caleb Plummer and his Blind Daughter lived all alone by themselves in a little cracked nutshell of a wooden house "— it belonged to *Tackleton,* the Toy-Maker, who was always called *Gruff and*

Tackleton, for, though his partner was dead, the name was quite suited to *Tackleton,* the task-master and the money-squeezer, and the *Plummers* both worked for him.

It was an awful, shaky old place to live in, but *Bertha,* the Blind Girl did not know "that the ceilings were discolored; walls blotched and bare of plaster here and there; high crevices untopped and widening every day; beams mouldering and tending downward. The Blind Girl never knew that iron was rusting, wood rotting, paper peeling off; the very size and shape and true proportion of the dwelling withering away. The Blind Girl never knew that ugly shapes of delf and earthen ware were on the board; that sorrow and faint heartedness were in the house; that Caleb's scanty hairs were turning greyer and more grey before her sightless face."

All this and more was *Caleb's* doing—"But he, too, had a Cricket on his Hearth, and listening sadly to its music, when the motherless Blind Child was very young, that Spirit had inspired him with the thought that even her great deprivation might be almost changed into a blessing, and the girl made happy by these little means."

Caleb and his daughter worked together on Dolls and their houses. "There were houses finished and unfinished, for Dolls of all stations of life. Suburban tenements for Dolls of moderate means; kitchens and single apartments for Dolls of the

lower classes; capital town residences for Dolls of high estate. Some of these establishments were already furnished according to estimate, with a view to the convenience of Dolls of limited income; others could be fitted on the most expensive scale from whole shelves of chairs and tables, sofas, bedsteads and upholstery. The nobility and gentry and public in general, for whose accommodation these tenements were designed, lay here and there in baskets, staring straight up at the ceiling. . . . The Doll-lady of distinction had wax limbs of perfect symmetry; . . . the next grade in the social scale being made of leather; and the next — of coarse linen stuff. As to the common-people, they had just so many matches out of tinder-boxes for their arms and legs, and there they were — established in their sphere at once, beyond the possibility of getting out of it."

What child could pass these vivid descriptions by. Toy-making is always fascinating, and *Caleb* and his blind daughter were dexterous workers.

There's a Mystery in the simple story and a Secret — *Dot's* Secret — and there's feasting and a wedding, and all the dear delightful things that go to make up everyday life, and it all turns out happily in the end, and everything is merry as it should be; for we are given to understand that wherever the Cricket chirps loudest on the hearth, there is found the happiest home.

There has been another emblem of happiness

lately discovered by Mr. Maurice Maeterlinck; it has the shape of a Bluebird, and it soars to strange countries, whither questioning children long to follow; but the Cricket — Dickens's Cricket — is always on the Hearth, and we real mortals — (and Dickens always wrote of real mortals — in spite of the Goblins and the Spirits) —

> Must stoop for happiness,
> If we its worth would know.

Doing the things which lie nearest to us was Dickens's simple creed, in the writing of his Christmas stories and in his Christmas spirit; homely little services from the rich to the poor; from the poor to each other. Dickens was a great preacher. How great, he himself never knew.

From that time forward the Christmas story became a feature of his life, and the world always looked for some Christmas message in some little gem of thought and feeling. He gave us "The Haunted Man," "The Battle of Life," "Somebody's Luggage," "Mrs. Lirriper's Lodgings," "Dr. Marigold," and a host of others, for generations to read and enjoy.

After Dickens's day, the Christmas story still held its place in the popular heart; even to-day we look eagerly for the Christmas number among our many magazines, and hunt for the stories. Some are strong, some are weak and unconvincing, yet

they breathe of Christmas, if ever so faintly, and we try to be satisfied.

But Dickens, with his lusty tales, gave us the very Spirit of Christmas; there is the strength of the pioneer in this work of his, and all of us, young and old, turn to him again and again with the coming of the Yule-tide.

CHAPTER XI.

THE GIRLS OF DICKENS'S DAY.

THE years that intervened between the writing of his novels were always restless years for the great author. The active mind, forever groping towards some higher ideal, was never better poised than when working out the intricate details of his stories, living in a dream world — dealing with dream people.

The interval between "The Cricket on the Hearth" and "Dombey and Son" was even more than usually restless. Indeed, restlessness was at the very root of his genius. After his return from America he found the year at home very trying — he wanted to see more of the world, so he went to Italy. He stayed long enough to become accustomed to the life and to the people of Genoa; then he wanted to travel through Italy, which he did — looked into the crater of Mt. Vesuvius — then back to Genoa, and then homesickness again, and Devonshire Terrace again, taking in Switzerland on the way back.

"What a beautiful country it is!" he writes.

"How poor and shrunken beside it is Italy in its brightest aspect."

This glimpse of Switzerland haunted him — it was such a small one, he longed for more — but home called him and he went. There was a short interval of rest before he settled down to work again, when he and his friends became stage-struck, and decided to give a play. They rented Miss Kelly's theater for one night, and produced Ben Jonson's "Every Man in his Humor." The first performance took place September 21, 1845, and was so great a success in a private way that another performance was given in a larger theater, to which the public were admitted, and the proceeds were given to charity. Dickens had exceptional gifts as an actor, and he often said that he would have been as successful "on the boards as he had been between them" (meaning the bindings of his books), had he devoted his time to it.

After this he went to Broadstairs for a short holiday, and on October 28, 1845, his sixth child and fourth son, Alfred Tennyson Dickens, was born.

Later he became deeply interested in the politics of the day; he wrote timely verses for *The Examiner* and short articles for the *Morning Chronicle,* but, not content with becoming a paid contributor on a daily paper, he was soon drawn into the giant scheme of editing a daily paper himself. Forster, knowing his friend's temperament, urged him

against it; but Dickens, who was never happy unless he had some sort of a periodical in charge, was eager for the experiment, and consequently on January 21, 1846, was launched in London the first issue of the *Daily News,* which holds its own to-day as one of the foremost of the London papers.

Dickens became the editor-in-chief, and his editorial staff was a powerful one. Both his father and his father-in-law held prominent positions, and many of his most intimate friends fell in line with him. It was a wonderful start for a newspaper, with such a name as Charles Dickens to head the working force; it was strongly backed, and, with such an energetic worker at the helm, it could not fail to steer into success. There was a magnetism about this man, young as he was, which one scarcely believes to-day.

Into the *Daily News* went, number by number, the "Travelling Sketches" of Italy, afterwards published under the title of "Pictures from Italy," in book form.

The editing of a daily paper involved more labor and worry than Dickens, in the first flush of enthusiasm, ever imagined. He could not bear the mechanical drudgery, and after a few weeks he decided to resign his post, which passed — for the rest of the year — into the hands of John Forster.

Interested as he was in politics and the affairs of the world, this was plainly not the mission of Charles Dickens; he was beginning to feel the need

of being closer to his world of readers than the columns of a newspaper would permit, and no one knew better than himself what work pleased his readers most. In truth, there was a new book buzzing in his head. He began to wander at night in strange nooks and corners of London, as he always did when the writing spell came upon him. He began to long for some quiet place, and to feel that London — with its political stir and the infant newspaper in which he was still too much interested — was not just then what he wanted. Indeed, we know enough of this restless young man to understand that where he was, was never where he wished to be, and, however trying such a disposition might have been to those about him, it certainly gave great results to the world.

Where he wanted to be just now was in Switzerland, but there were many things to be done beforehand. The "Cricket on the Hearth" was completed for Christmas, and the "Travelling Sketches" were concluded in the *Daily News,* gathered together, and issued in book form under the title of "Pictures from Italy," and in his preface he tells his readers frankly that he has made a mistake in interrupting — even for a short while — their old relations, adding, "I am now about to resume them joyfully in Switzerland; where, during another year of absence, I can at once work out the themes I have now in my mind, without interruption."

Then, too, a longing for the old home came over him, and on his birthday, 1846, a congenial party — consisting of himself and his wife, Miss Hogarth, Maclise, Jerrold and Forster — went to Rochester to celebrate, stopped at the "Bull" Inn, which "Pickwick" had made famous, and visited all his favorite spots in the neighborhood. Again the "small boy" wandered in spirit over the Kentish hills, and once more he showed his friends the Gad's Hill of his dreams. He was nearer to it now, but still not near enough to take it as his own. He only liked to look at it once in a while, and wonder how long it would be before he would reach his heart's desire.

He left England the end of May, 1846, having rented his house in Devonshire Terrace for one year, and reached Lausanne, Switzerland, early in June. Here in this beautiful spot he secured a villa smothered in roses, "beautifully situated on a hill that rises from the lake," while his study looked out upon the water and the mountains. His pretty resting-place was appropriately called "Rose-mont," and here, when his usual box of materials had arrived from London, he settled down to write in earnest; he never could write without these quaint little bronze figures on his desk, his blue ink, and his quill pens. How any genius could flow from the scratching point of a quill pen, it is hard to understand, but Charles Dickens — to the end of his days — wrote with no other.

There are no such geniuses — more's the pity! in these days of fountain-pens, but perhaps we will have one some day; there may be some little "Kindergartner" even now, whose great brain may be developing into a Dickens or a Thackeray or a Scott, or even a Shakespeare; there may be some childish voices now singing "Tra-la-la" in baby chorus, that may be able to move a world when the voice gets deeper and the child becomes a man — who knows!

At any rate, Dickens was busy enough before the arrival of his magic box; he wrote an article on the Ragged Schools, for Sir John Russell, and a good deal for Miss Coutts (afterwards Baroness Burdett-Coutts, the millionaire and philanthropist), in reference to her charitable work, and about half of the New Testament, which he was simplifying for his children's use, and then —

"Began Dombey!"

he writes with italics and exclamations.

He considered this book an era, and no doubt it was. It was a great book with a great theme. It was called "Dombey and Son," though for the pathos and the pity of it all, it might have been better named "Dombey and Daughter"; the "Son" is but a shadow — the "Daughter," the real dominant character of the book. Never for a moment through the intricate windings of the story do we lose sight of the pathetic figure of

Florence Dombey, this girl of girls, the most complete and perfectly girlish girl that Dickens, up to this period, has ever given us.

We first see the pretty little girl at the bedside of her dying mother; only one heart was aching in that heavy, silent place, where the loud ticking of *Mr. Dombey's* watch and the Doctor's watch ran a race in the hush and silence. Then it was over, and she was alone — quite alone, for "the blue coat and stiff white cravat, which, with a pair of creaking boots and a very loud ticking watch, embodied her idea of a father" was nothing to her but an image to be shunned whenever it was possible.

Who knows what would have become of the little girl during those first dark days in the grim house, had it not been for the new brother. The servants in the shadowed house were kind, but one word from her father, one glance of kindly notice — all that the child really craved — never came her way. She ate her little heart out in silent grief and sorrow, until the kind-hearted servants gave her the comfort she needed.

"'What have they done with my mamma?' inquired this little mourner of six years.

"'. . . Come nearer here, my dear Miss,'" said good Polly Toodles [known as Richards, when installed as the nurse of little Paul]. 'Don't be afraid of me.'

"'I am not afraid of you,' said the child, draw-

ing nearer. 'But I want to know what they have done with my mamma.'

"'My darling,' said Richards, 'you wear that pretty black frock in remembrance of your mamma.'

"'I can remember my mamma,' returned the child, with tears springing to her eyes, 'in any frock.'

"'But people put on black to remember people when they're gone.'

"'Where gone?' asked the child.

"'Come and sit down by me,' said Richards, 'and I'll tell you a story.'"

And from the lips of this homely, workaday woman, fell the beautiful story of death and the life hereafter, told as only a simple, untutored soul could tell it, and the little girl listened with dark eyes full of understanding, and clasped her arms around the good nurse's neck.

"'And the child's heart,' said Polly, drawing her to her breast, 'the little daughter's heart was so full of the truth of this, that even when she heard it from a strange nurse that couldn't tell it right . . . she found a comfort in it — didn't feel so lonely — sobbed and cried upon her bosom — took kindly to the baby lying in her lap — and — there, there, there!' said Polly, smoothing the child's curls and dropping tears upon them. 'There, poor dear!'"

What little *Florence* would have done without

this homely sympathy there is no telling; but the sensitive child was touched in the right spot and at the right moment, to keep her baby heart from breaking.

Her own special attendant, *Susan Nipper,* seemed to *Florence* quite an ancient person — indeed, she was at least fourteen — and her sharp, jerky ways and biting tongue earned her the name of "Spitfire"; but she was a wholesome, kindly girl for all that, and, like *Mrs. Toodles,* her heart ached for her lonely charge, while her black eyes — we always remember *Susan Nipper's* black eyes — flashed and snapped when she saw her little mistress imposed upon.

Girls were not much cared for in the *Dombey* household. Indeed, the girls of Dickens's day were shy, retiring little creatures, tucked away out of sight behind their big brothers. *Mr. Dombey,* the head of the house, was in truth no different from a thousand other pompous gentlemen of the same stamp. To have an heir was his ambition. *Florence,* the first-born, being "only a girl," was made to feel from the beginning that she was a mistake. Her father, absorbed in his great business, buried in plans for the future welfare of Dombey and Son, thought of her not at all, but only of the baby boy upon whom his selfish hopes were centered.

In the creation of little *Florence,* Charles Dickens became the champion of all the little neglected girl-

hood in the English realm. There were many such grim homes as *Mr. Dombey's,* and many pieces of iron and flint like *Mr. Dombey,* men who lived only in the hope of perpetuating their empty names, and consequently the more small boys they had, to carry that name through coming generations, the better pleased were they. Therefore the little girls picked up an education as best they could, lived as best they could, grew up as best they could, and if they chanced — by some happy accident — to be pretty or interesting, why, perhaps these lords of creation, the small boys, now grown to be big boys, might be attracted by them, and marriage would follow, and what was supposed to be the highest ambition of any sensible little girl from her cradle, would be happily accomplished.

Florence Dombey not only had the indifference of her father to battle with, but there was besides always a smouldering fire of jealousy, which sometimes burned with the glow of hate. This quiet, gentle girl had the power to attract the very people whom he wished to draw nearer to himself. His dying wife had eyes only for *Florence,* and ears only for her whispered word; his little son turned only to *Floy,* as he called her, and the beautiful woman who, in the course of years, became his second wife had only one wholesome, human passion, and that was for *Florence.*

Dickens has given us some beautiful portraits of this lonely, lovable girl. The first picture is

at her mother's bedside; next we see her as her father did one day —"toiling up the great, wide, vacant staircase" with her little brother in her arms; "his head was lying on her shoulder, one of his arms thrown negligently around her neck. So they went toiling up; she singing all the way, and Paul sometimes crooning out a feeble accompaniment. Mr. Dombey looked after them until they reached the top of the staircase — not without halting to rest by the way — and passed out of sight; and then he stood gazing upward, until the dull rays of the moon, glimmering in a melancholy manner through the dim skylight, sent him back to his own room."

Had little *Paul* lived, *Mr. Dombey* might in time have shown some shadow of kindness to his beautiful little daughter, for love of him, but this was not to be, for *Paul* soon faded and died, and *Florence* lived only to remind her father that he had lost the one hope of his life, that Dombey and Son would be but an empty name in days to come.

We see her as the tender nurse of her dying brother, old beyond her years, because of the lonely secluded life she led in the great house, away from other little girls. She was only twelve, and Paul was six, but she was a woman in every thought and feeling.

The love between this little brother and sister shines through the whole book. Even when *Paul*

had left her, the memory of him stirred always in her heart, and his feeling for her was one of the most pathetic bits of child-love. Only once in his short life were they ever separated, and that was when he went to *Dr. Blimber's* Select School. Even then *Florence* hovered near him, for *Dr. Blimber's* School was at Brighton, and *Mrs. Pipchin's* house, where *Florence* stopped, was just around the corner.

The little boy, so good, so gentle, and so frail, never played with the young gentlemen of *Dr. Blimber's* School; he used to sit for hours watching the Sea from the window of his little bedroom; he loved to see the ships moving upon the bosom of the deep waters.

He had the quaintest ideas about things — that baby boy — to him the sails of the tiny boats looked like waving white arms beckoning him to follow; where — the child could not tell, but far, far away, farther than India, which to an English child seemed very far indeed.

When the evenings grew longer, "Paul stole up to his window to look for Florence. She always passed and repassed at a certain time, until she saw him, and their mutual recognition was a gleam of sunshine in Paul's daily life."

His father came, too, but *Paul* did not know it, for the reserved and haughty man came at night, when none could see him looking up at his son's windows.

Then came that time when *Florence* never left her brother, when he said in his feeble way:

"'Now lay me down, and, Floy, come close to me and let me see you.'

"Sister and brother wound their arms around each other, and the golden light came streaming in, and fell upon them, locked together.

"'How fast the river runs between its green banks and the rushes, Floy! But it's very near the sea, I hear the waves! They always said so!'

"Presently he told her that the motion of the boat upon the stream was lulling him to rest. How green the banks were now, how bright the flowers growing on them, and how tall the rushes! Now the boat was out at sea, but gliding smoothly on. And now there was a shore before him. Who stood on the bank? —

"He put his hands together as he did at his prayers. He did not remove his arms to do it, but they saw him fold them so behind her neck.

"'Mamma is like you, Floy, I know her by the face. But tell them that the print upon the stairs at school is not divine enough. The light about the head is shining on me as I go!'

"The old ripple on the wall came back again, and nothing else stirred in the room. The old, old fashion! The fashion that came in with our first garments, and will last unchanged until our race has run its course and the wide firmament is

rolled up like a scroll. The old, old fashion — Death!

"Oh, thank God, all who see it, for that older fashion yet, of Immortality! And look upon us, angels of young children, with regards not quite estranged, when the swift river bears us to the ocean!"

That Dickens was a man of deep religious feeling, no one can doubt, after reading this beautiful description, which is only one of many similar descriptions scattered through his books.

It has grown the fashion to say that the pathos of such scenes is terribly over-rated, that Dickens was apt to grow absurdly sentimental at such times, and many other similar things. There is only one answer to these up-to-date, modern people — who think Dickens old-fashioned. Let them read the death of little *Paul,* and if they can see that gentle little child, loosening his hold of life; that tender, desolate sister clinging to the frail body; if they can see this quite unmoved and can turn from these pages with undimmed eyes — why, the fault lies within themselves and not in Dickens, who wept — himself — as if his heart would break, over the death of his favorite.

There is another picture of *Florence,* sad and lonely, in the great shut-up house where "there was no one nearer and dearer than Susan, to uphold the striving heart in its anguish. Was there no other neck to clasp; no other face to turn to;

no one else to say a soothing word to such deep sorrow? Was Florence so alone in the bleak world that nothing else remained to her? Nothing. Stricken motherless and brotherless at once, for in the loss of little Paul, that first and greatest loss fell heavily upon her — this was the only help she had."

Was it any wonder, then, that she loved *Susan Nipper;* the black-eyed little maid with the sharp tongue and the soft heart grew to be very dear to her young mistress, who presently began to pick up the threads of her sad life. Think of it, children with loving fathers! Think of this beautiful young girl, shut up in her own rooms! while her father, locked in his, would not look upon her face.

There was a house across the way where some rosy children lived; they were four little motherless girls, and they had a father who made pets of them. Poor, hungry *Florence* watched them from behind her heavy curtains; she did not envy them, it was not *their* father she wanted. Her own was downstairs, all alone in his gloomy rooms, and she dared not go to him.

"Sometimes when no one in the house was stirring . . . she would softly leave her own room, and with noiseless feet descend the staircase and approach her father's door. Against it — scarcely breathing — she would rest her face and head, and press her lips in the yearning of her

love. She crouched on the stone floor outside it every night — to listen even for his breath, and in her one absorbing wish to show him some affection, to be a consolation to him, to win him over to the endurance of some tenderness from her — his solitary child; she would have knelt down at his feet if she had dared, in humble supplication."

But other friends were coming to brighten her days. First of all there was *Mr. Toots, Paul's* schoolmate at *Dr. Blimber's,* and with him came *Diogenes,* the *Blimbers'* dog, of whom *Paul* had been so fond, a rough, shaggy, ill-mannered dog, but a most important character, for *Florence* never parted with him, and *Di,* as she called him, was ever faithful in his love for his little mistress.

There is a sweet love story built around the lonely girl, who soon found that the home of *Solomon Gills,* the instrument maker, was the dearest spot on earth, because *Walter Gay,* his nephew, lived there, and *Walter* was all that a young girl most admired in a young man, and so they were married. Their love rose out of the mist of sadness, for "Dombey and Son" is, after all, the story of the rise and fall of a haughty, heartless man, a man whose ambition was no greater than his pride, and both were dragged in the dust.

The famous *Captain Cuttle,* with his iron hook instead of a hand, and his big, benevolent heart, is

a portrait from life, also *Solomon Gills;* and the sign of the "Little Midshipman" is still to be seen, though he keeps guard upon a bracket in front of a more pretentious place of business. *Mrs. Skewton, Mrs. Pipchin,* and *Little Paul* himself were all living portraits, while the *Toodle* family has become so well-known among the readers of Dickens that they seem quite real and substantial. Even *Miss Cornelia Blimber* could be traced, for Dickens's son Charles remembers a young lady equally as intellectual who helped her father in a small school which he attended.

Learned girls of Dickens's day were suspicious characters, even *Florence* never went to school after she was fourteen; indeed, her education was the very last thing considered, and looking back upon the story, which covers all those years when she should have been studying, it is hard to understand how she ever learned to read and write. But in some mysterious way these things came to her. Perhaps her aunt, stupid *Mrs. Chick,* who never received credit for anything sensible, had some ideas of her own concerning girls, and, no doubt — being a kind-hearted person — saw to it that her little niece received some instruction of some kind.

Edith Dombey, Florence's beautiful stepmother, had many outside accomplishments; she could sing and play the harp and piano, and she could also draw, but girls of that day never discussed books.

Florence helped her little brother with his studies, and *Dr. Blimber* set no easy tasks, so we may reasonably suppose that in the intervals, when *Florence* was not thinking of her sad lot, she was training her active young mind.

It is doubtful if girls in *Susan Nipper's* station ever learned how to do more than read and write, though that young person, being exceptionally clever, may have caught up the little accomplishments that *Florence* possessed. At any rate, her remarkable flow of language and her quaint way of saying things, made her quite an unusual girl.

"Dombey and Son" marked an era in Charles Dickens's life; it stamped him for all time as a Novelist. The innumerable other things which he did by the way were mere incidents in his career, though they were most important incidents, and lived because he put his life and energy into them. There were several Christmas stories written between his greater efforts; there were two between "Dombey" and "Copperfield"—"The Battle of Life" and "The Haunted Man." There was also a new periodical, *Household Words,* started in 1850, some months before he finished "David Copperfield," and there were innumerable articles, and letters, and verses, and essays, and short stories, and many journeys and theatricals, and Heaven knows what — to vary the life of this restless young writer. And here it may be interesting to know that in 1848, when plans were afoot for the

purchase and preservation of Shakespeare's home at Stratford-on-Avon, he did all that he could to help. He joined a company of distinguished amateurs — himself the star — and they gave nine performances in provincial towns, realizing over twenty-five hundred pounds.

Two other little Dickenses — Sidney Smith and Henry Fielding — were born between the writing of "Dombey" and "Copperfield," and their ninth child, little Dora, came during the writing of "David Copperfield," shortly after the death of *David's* Child-wife.

Dickens began to think of this new serial sometime around the close of 1848. "Dombey" had appeared and was well received. It was Forster's proposition that this novel should be written in the first person, and, acting also on Forster's hint, Dickens decided to put some of his own life into the pages. Early in the new year (1849) he visited Great Yarmouth, which he considered one of the strangest places in the world — "One hundred and forty-six miles of hill-less marsh between it and London, . . . I shall certainly try my hand at it." This was the site of the *Peggottys'* home, and Dickens actually saw the old boat which these simple fishermen turned into a home.

The simplicity, beauty, and truth of "David Copperfield" is especially remarkable at this period, for the great world was beginning to recognize the genial qualities of the "Inimitable Boz," as he

was often called, and he was fêted by everyone. This did not turn his head, but it tickled his vanity, and his besetting sin was vanity. He was vain of his position, of his work, of the esteem in which he was held, of his appearance, which was always most attractive, of the very clothes he wore, and his fondness for gaudy colors became almost a personal trait; but, for all that, he was as simple as a child when it came to writing this wonderful story of his life, and we have already seen how closely entwined was the little boyhood of *David Copperfield* and that of Charles Dickens.

It was the first story Dickens ever wrote in which his young hero was anything more than a figure on which to hang a plot. *David's* personality is very strong, perhaps because we know his origin. At any rate, never for an instant do we forget that *David* moves through almost every incident, not as a pleasing background, but as an acting force.

Then, too, the girls who figure in the story are drawn with a skill and a knowledge which show him to be the father of two interesting little maids of his own. They were quite good-sized girls now, able to take some interest in their father's writing and to add much to his home enjoyment, for Devonshire Terrace was gay with much company, and dancing and music often wound up a happy evening.

Twelfth Night — the birthday of young Charles Dickens — was always celebrated in fine style, and

on one occasion, in preparing for the festivity, the two girls undertook to teach their father the Polka step. He was an apt pupil, but on the night before the party he had a wild feeling that he had forgotten the step. It was very cold in the early hours of the morning, but he leaped out of bed, and practiced it to his heart's content — in the dark. These girls of his were a continual source of delight and interest to him, and it was only natural that the girl faces that appeared in his books should be fair and charming.

There was always something pathetic about his girls. There seemed always in their young lives some hint of shadow. There was for instance always the mist of the sea about *Little Em'ly*. The fair child — much as she graced the quaint old boat-home — seemed always in spirit on the beach, for she was a child of the sea; she never knew in her innocent girlhood what lay in the life beyond. *David,* in describing one of their numerous walks, speaks of her fearlessness, as the giant breakers thundered on the beach.

"'I'm not afraid of it this way,' said little Em'ly. 'But I wake when it blows, and tremble to think of Uncle Dan and Ham, and believe I hear 'em crying out for help. . . . But I'm not afraid in this way. Not a bit. Look here!'

"She started from my side and ran along the jagged timber which protruded from the place we stood upon, and overhung the deep water at some

height — without the least defense. The incident is so impressed on my remembrance that if I were a draughtsman, I could draw its form here, I dare say, accurately as it was that day, and little Em'ly springing forward to her destruction (as it appeared to me), with a look I have never forgotten, directed far out to sea.

"The light, bold, fluttering little figure turned and came back safe to me, and I soon laughed at my fears, and the cry I had uttered fruitlessly in any case, for there was no one near."

Poor *Little Em'ly,* with her pretty face and dainty ways, with her hope some day of being a lady — how much better it would have been if her sure foot had slipped that time, and the huge breaker had wrapped her round and carried her out to the deep sea where her father lay. Later we see her a dainty creature in the first flush of innocent girlhood, such a charming girl, with her blue eyes and sunny curls, and her shy, quiet ways, the promised wife of her brawny cousin Ham. And last of all we see the pitiful wreck of the gay little craft — the broken, sorrowful young woman, going away to a new world to begin a new life. A brave girl, after all, was *Little Em'ly,* willing to live her poor little life as best she could.

"'I wonder if you could see my Em'ly now, Mas'r Davy, whether you'd know her,'" said old Peggotty, on the occasion of a visit to his old friends.

"'Is she so altered?' I inquired.

"'I doen't know. I see her ev'ry day and doen't know; but odd times, I have thowt so. A slight figure,' said Mr. Peggotty, looking at the fire, 'kiender worn; soft, sorrowful blue eyes; a delicate face; a pritty head leaning a little down; a quiet voice and way — timid a'most. That's Em'ly!'

"'. . . She might have married well a mort of times, "but, Uncle," she says to me, "that's gone forever." Cheerful along with me; retired when others is by; fond of going any distance fur to teach a child, or fur to tend a sick person, or fur to do some kindness tow'rd a young girl's wedding (and she's done a-many, but has never seen one); fondly loving of her uncle; patient, liked by young and old; sowt out by all that has any trouble. That's Em'ly.'"

Another picture, an exquisite miniature, rises before us. A girl so young, she seemed indeed a child. A veritable fairy was *Dora Spenlow,* an angel in blue with golden ringlets and blue eyes. Could anyone help falling in love with her? Could *David,* who always fell captive to every beautiful face? But this was more than a passing fancy. Little *Dora* held him fast by a silken thread, so strong that only death could break it. *David* had married a child, a sweet, lovely, lovable child, whose greatest joy was to "help" him, as she fondly imagined, by sitting on a low stool beside

him and holding his pens. That solemn duty over, she would romp with *Jip,* her spaniel, and blunder over her simple housekeeping in the most adorable manner. *David* loved her as a pretty plaything, but her little head with its wealth of golden curls held nothing beyond a few loving thoughts which she lavished upon "Doady," as she called him.

There are many Doras in the world, gay little trifling Doras, who dance through it without a care, and somehow when they go out of it, as *Dora* did, there is a great aching void, much bigger than the space they filled in life. For memory twines forget-me-nots, and *Dora's* betrothal ring was made of forget-me-nots, as if anyone could forget the darling child. Even when she faded before his eyes, she left a shaft of light in her vanishing.

Dickens spared no pains with this dainty miniature. "Little Blossom," as *David's* aunt, *Miss Betsey Trotwood,* called her, bloomed for a short while, drooped and faded, and finally died. But we will remember her as we remember all frail and beautiful things. Yet while we are sorry that *David* was left desolate in his youth, we cannot help thinking that it was the best thing *Dora* could have done.

"'Oh, Doady,'" she said as she lay dying before him, her golden hair spread out upon her pillow like an aureole, "'after more years, you never could have loved your child-wife better than

you do; and after more years, she would have so tried and disappointed you, that you might not have been able to love her half so well! I know I was too young and foolish. It is much better as it is!'"

And so it was, for there was *Agnes!* It is rather difficult to describe *Agnes.* We can best do so in *David's* own words, for his acquaintance with her dated from the days of his little boyhood, when he went to *Dr. Strong's* School, and boarded with *Mr. Wickfield, Agnes's* father.

"Mr. Wickfield tapped at the door in a corner of the paneled wall, and a girl of about my own age came out and kissed him. On her face I saw immediately the placid, sweet expression of the lady whose picture had looked at me downstairs. It seemed to my imagination as if the portrait had grown womanly, and the original remained a child. Although her face was quite bright and happy, there was a tranquillity about it and about her, a quiet, good, calm spirit that I have never forgotten; that I never shall forget.

". . . I cannot call to mind where or when, in my childhood, I had seen a stained glass window in a church. Nor do I recollect its subject. But I know that when I saw her turn round in the grave light of the old staircase and wait for us above, I thought of that window; and that I associated something of its tranquil brightness with Agnes Wickfield ever afterward."

Through the story this calm presence is always with us. Always cheerful, there was yet something pathetic in the lonely girlhood of *Agnes Wickfield.* In drawing a character such as this, Dickens should have given her companions; instead, she lived in the old house with an elderly father, full of memories and forebodings, and with no girls of her own age to share her girlish thoughts. It is little wonder then that *Agnes* — even at her youngest — seems quite grown-up, and quite natural that *David,* always looking up to her in boyhood, should think of her later on as quite beyond his reach. Yet when sorrow touched him, there was *Agnes,* ready to console; when joy came to him, she smiled in sympathy, and in the crowning moment she came to him as naturally and simply as if her place had always been by his side.

"'Dearest husband!'" she said on their wedding-day, . . . "'I have one more thing to tell you.'

"'Let me hear it, love.'

"'It grows out of the night when Dora died. She sent you for me.'

"'She did.'

"'She told me that she left me something. Can you think what it was?'

"I believed I could. I drew the wife who had so long loved me, closer to my side.

"'She told me that she made a last request to me, and left me a last charge.'

"'And it was —'

"'That only I would occupy this vacant place.' And Agnes laid her head upon my breast and wept; and I wept with her, though we were so happy."

"David Copperfield" was published in November, 1850, and early in the following year Mrs. Dickens and little Baby Dora were very ill. In March the baby seemed to be all right, but her mother — still delicate — was sent to Great Malvern, to get back her strength, leaving her husband to care for the children. During her absence John Dickens died, and was buried on April fifth, so the author was in the midst of trouble, but, never neglecting his public duties, he agreed to preside at the General Theatrical Fund Dinner. In a letter to Thomas Mitton he wrote:

"I played with little Dora before I went, and was told when I left the chair that she had died in a moment."

The news was kept from Dickens until after he had made his speech, and then his friends — Forster and Mark Lemon — broke it to him as best they could.

In an interesting article on this subject, there is published a beautiful letter from Dickens to his wife, to prepare her for the sorrow awaiting her at home. He says in conclusion:

"I cannot close without putting the strongest entreaty and injunction upon you to come with

perfect composure, to remember what I have often told you, that we can never expect to be exempt as to our many children, from the afflictions of other parents, and that if when you come I should even have to say to you, "Our little baby is dead," you are also to do your duty to the rest, and to show yourself worthy of the great trust you hold in them. If you will only read this steadily, I have a perfect confidence in your doing what is right.

"Ever Affectionately,
"Charles Dickens."

Then follows a prayer written in the watches of that sad night, which he also sent her, a prayer on Resignation, which shows the deep religious streak in Dickens's character. Little Dora's death cast a shadow on the happy feeling of work well done, which "David Copperfield" naturally inspired, but Dickens was not one to brood over these inevitable trials. He had so much to live for — with his wife, his blooming family, his still vigorous manhood — for he was only thirty-nine — and his ever increasing fame, that he could not well repine.

The years had brought their changes, among them the death of his beloved sister Fanny, but there was work to do and the will to do it, the strong, indomitable will, which was the secret of his genius and success.

CHAPTER XII.

LITTLE HOUSEKEEPERS IN DICKENS-LAND.

N the life of Charles Dickens there were two or three ruling passions. His love of Christmas we have seen; his love of animals was well-known; but his love of home was beyond all words. No matter where his restless feet carried him, into what strange and foreign countries they might journey, wherever they rested was home, and the vision of home brightened all the best of his books. Consequently his pictures of girls are always fairest when they emerge from the background of home.

It may be a pretty home, or a sordid poverty-stricken hole in the wall; it may be in two rooms — it may be in ten — these are mere outward circumstances. Home is where the hearth is, and the little housekeepers who carried their keys jingling in a small basket were the fairy spirits of home.

Sometimes, alas! housekeeping was reduced to such a slender portion of the day's work that there was not even a cupboard to which a key could be fitted; when the poor provisions went straight from the small venders into the hungry mouths; where "setting things to rights" meant shaking up the

poor beds, dusting the rickety furniture, and letting the sunshine in through the cracked window-panes. But Dickens's little heroines had a certain grace in doing these things, a certain neatness and deftness which made them very attractive, no matter how poor they were. Dickens himself was peculiarly neat and deft — he hated disorder; his own belongings were always scrupulously tidy, and the home with its hearth brushed, its kettle on the hob, its air of human comfort, was always delightful to write about, and in all of his stories his girls were excellent housekeepers.

Kate Nickleby was the presiding genius of the pretty cottage to which *Nicholas* brought poor *Smike,* and the forlorn boy used to lie and watch her flitting about her daily womanly duties in the little home, with a world of pathos in his eyes. Dickens dearly loved to add a touch of comfort to the home life: the glow of the fire; the comfortable chair; in the background the table set for the coming meal; and the graceful figure of a girl moving quickly in the energy of "getting" supper or dinner, was a pleasing addition to the picture. *Little Nell* never had her chance, but she had the home instinct and would have made an ideal housekeeper; for wherever the two poor wanderers chanced to rest, there for the moment was home, as cheerful and comfortable as circumstances could make it, even though on the morrow they might shoulder their bundles and trudge on. In

the schoolmaster's small, mean house her fairy presence was good to feel, and, had she stayed longer, she would have brought the charm of home within those humble walls.

To the *Marchioness*, indeed, was given her opportunity. She made of *Dick Swiveller's* poor room a perfect paradise of coziness and comfort. Her little ill-kempt, awkward person flew about this limited space, and brought order out of chaos. There were no jingling keys, to be sure — she had done with keys and keyholes when she left the *Brass's* — but the capable air of the small servant dispelled any doubts as to her housekeeping, and when *Dick Swiveller* opened his eyes at last upon the cheerful fire (there was always a cheerful fire) and the air of cleanliness and comfort all about him, it is no wonder that he cried for very gratitude.

Gay, inconsequent *Dolly Varden* was not much of a housekeeper, though she was given to brightening every place with her sweet young presence, and doubtless when she became the landlady of the Maypole Inn her keys actually did jingle in the basket which she carried on her plump arm.

Was there ever a more lovable little housekeeper than *Ruth Pinch,* and was there ever a nicer person to keep house for than *Brother Tom!* She didn't know much, to be sure, and he knew less; but the bare little place with its poor furniture was neat as wax, and it was home, besides, their own home, a refuge they had not known for many a

long year. And what does it matter, after all, where one lives — and how, if love is there, smiling at one's elbow during the creation of a pudding?

History does not record the fact, but beyond doubt Dickens must have been a skilled cook. He knew all the little twists and turns, and of one thing we may be certain; he could have cooked the *Cratchit's* Christmas pudding as well as *Mrs. Cratchit* herself.

Mrs. Dot was a finished housekeeper; she seemed to know by instinct the sort of coziness her big, tired Carrier most appreciated. There was the home and the hearth, of course, and undoubtedly the Cricket lightened the cares of housekeeping, while the Baby lent the finishing touch to the picture, though pretty, plump *Mrs. Dot* was but a child in years, herself. Was there anything more cheerful than the glow of that fire, the singing of that Kettle, and the chirping of that Cricket? And all because *Mrs. Dot* knew how to keep house. There was a cold joint if we remember, and many other things a hungry man might like on a cold night after a long drive, and they both blessed the Cricket on the Hearth, though it is our private and truthful opinion that it wasn't the Cricket at all — he found that hearth very comfortable and cozy and home-like — and it was all *Mrs. Dot's* doing!

Florence Dombey was very inexperienced as a housekeeper. It was only when she ran away from

home to the sign of the "Little Midshipman" that she began to show any talent in that direction. She took the reins from clumsy old *Captain Cuttle,* and almost imperceptibly the home of the old instrument-maker took on a more ship-shape expression. It was only a dainty touch here and there, but it worked wonders, and *Florence* was being trained in the right sort of school to become the wife of a poor man.

"David Copperfield" bristles with housekeepers, young and old. First of all there is *Mrs. Gummidge,* that "lone, lorn critter" who lived in the *Peggottys'* house-boat, and wept quarts of tears over her excellent cooking, and kept the living-room clean and tidy; but *Little Em'ly* was the spirit of that simple home, and, when all is told, it is the spirit of the thing one has to do which counts for most.

And so with the housekeeping Dickens describes. What makes it so attractive is the spirit of it; food tastes better if seasoned with good humor, and the little housekeepers he wrote about invariably brought smiles to their tasks. *Dora* danced through her few domestic duties. She did not accomplish much beyond the fascinating jingling of her keys, but her sunny temper sweetened even the failures, and *David* smiled indulgently at his child-wife.

Agnes was the good genius of home. Everything she touched shone with a quiet radiance —

everything breathed of her serene presence. Her keys were magic ones, and all who came within her spell partook of the generous warmth she managed to shed around her.

Three years intervened between the publication of "David Copperfield" and "Bleak House," Dickens's next important story; three busy years which saw the beginning of *Household Words,* his new venture in the editorial line, for he was editor-in-chief, and kept the post in spite of interruptions, for several years, contributing much material in weekly writing. "The Child's History of England," written for his children, was also published in this interval, and last, but not least, his seventh son and tenth child, Edward Bulwer-Lytton Dickens, was born, March 13, 1852.

There was another important change in his life, and that was his removal from Devonshire Terrace, and the purchase of Tavistock House, a much larger and more stately home.

"Bleak House" first appeared number by number, its usual form, and was read with the deepest interest by the public, for it was the tale of a suit in Chancery, involving a vast fortune which was swallowed up by the law, under the guise of Equity. The chief attraction which "Bleak House" would naturally possess for any girl reader would be the very youthful element running through the story, the very delightful home center which *Bleak House* became, and, above all, the dear little housekeeper

with her basket of jingling keys, who flitted through the quaint old-fashioned place. "Dear Dame Durden" her Guardian called her, though her real name was *Esther Summerson,* and on the happy morning of her arrival at *Bleak House* she received the household keys in the inevitable little basket, and became the gentle, ministering spirit in the rambling, irregular, delightful *Bleak House,* of which *Mr. Jarndyce* (a descendant of the famous *Jarndyce vs. Jarndyce*) was the genial elderly master.

This dear old bachelor's seclusion was invaded by three young people all at once. They were *Ada Clare* and *Richard Carstone,* wards in Chancery, and *Esther* came as a companion to the pretty *Ada.* Of this interesting trio, *Mr. Jarndyce* was the chosen Guardian, and it was he who sent the keys by a maid to *Miss Summerson.* There were two bunches all labeled.

"'For you, miss,' said the maid.

"'For me?' said I [Esther writes this in narrative form].

"'The housekeeping keys, miss.'

"I showed my surprise, for she added with some little surprise on her own part: 'I was told to bring them to you as soon as you was alone, Miss — Miss Summerson, if I don't deceive myself.'

"'Yes,' said I, 'that is my name.'

"'The large bunch is the housekeeping, and the little bunch is the cellars, miss. Any time you was

pleased to appoint to-morrow morning, I was to show you the presses and things they belong to.'

"I said I would be ready at half past six; and, after she was gone, stood looking at the basket, quite lost in the magnitude of my trust. Ada found me thus, and had such a delightful confidence in me when I showed her the keys and told her about them that it would have been insensibility and ingratitude not to feel encouraged."

So *Dame Durden* took over the pleasant responsibilities of housekeeping in a home where everything was arranged in the most agreeable manner.

The two girls had charming bedrooms, with a cozy sitting-room between, furnished in green, while upon the walls, framed and glazed, were "numbers of surprising and surprised birds, staring out of pictures at a real trout in a case, as brown and shining as if it had been served with gravy. . . . In my room there were oval engravings of the months; ladies haymaking in short waists, and large hats tied under the chin, for June; smooth-legged noblemen pointing — with cocked hats — to village steeples, for October." Altogether a quaint, old-fashioned and charming room, as quaint and charming as the master of the house, who gave himself a terrible, ferocious character, called his cheerful, home-like den, "the Growlery," and bade them all to beware of his temper, especially when the wind blew east, showing how he laughed in his

sleeve at those people who are always making the weather and the winds an excuse for their bad tempers.

Did ever poor lonely girl find such a haven as *Esther Summerson* found in *Bleak House!* And, with the exception of the *Cheeryble Brothers,* was there ever such a lovable man as *Esther's Guardian,* and was it any wonder that the girl bloomed into a beautiful young woman. Oh! how the keys jingled as *Dame Durden* went demurely about her work, and how often the fine old *Guardian* would steal out of the "Growlery" to watch her as she passed.

It is a sweet story of home — this "Bleak House," and the evil doings of Chancery Court seem very far away from the peaceful seclusion of the quaint mansion. Here *Esther* lived contented year after year, while the tangled meshes of the intricate plot drew her at last into the shadow — but only for a while, for she emerged into the light again, a proud and happy woman.

In "Bleak House" we have many glimpses of home life, not always so charming as the life at *Mr. Jarndyce's,* but interesting because of the contrast and the unspoken sermons that haunted the four walls.

Take the *Jellybys* for instance, where *Esther* and *Ada Clare* stopped during the Court session, before they went to *Bleak House. Mrs. Jellyby* was a great philanthropist, and all her thoughts were cen-

tered on the Africans and how to help them, and all her time was taken up in corresponding with public bodies and private individuals, while the *Jellyby* household went to rack and ruin.

When the two young ladies first entered this beautiful home, they were ushered into the room, *Esther* tells us —" which was strewn with papers and nearly filled by a great writing-table covered with similar litter . . . not only very untidy, but very dirty. . . ."

What principally struck them was the jaded-looking, tired girl " who sat at the writing-table, biting the feather of her pen and staring at us. I suppose nobody was ever in such a state of ink. And from her tumbled hair to her pretty feet — which were disfigured with frayed and broken satin slippers, trodden down at heel — she really seemed to have no article of dress upon her from a pin upwards that was in its proper condition or its right place."

Mrs. Jellyby's housekeeping was certainly a trial to the flesh, and poor *Caddy,* the tired daughter, was really too tired to lend a hand or care. She was a nice girl, but she was wearied with writing letters for her mother about clothing and housing the Africans, when their own clothes were in tatters, and their own house not fit to live in. *Caddy* felt these things as she glanced at the fresh, dainty-looking girls, and wondered why they came there. When the two guests were shown to their rooms,

they found them bare and disorderly. *Caddy* escorted them.

"'You would like some hot water, wouldn't you?' said Miss Jellyby, looking round for a jug with a handle to it, but looking in vain."

But there was no hot water and nothing to put it in, and it was altogether cold and cheerless and wretched. There was a whole troop of little *Jellybys,* "and our attention was distracted by the constant apparition of noses and fingers in situations of danger between the hinges of the doors. It was impossible to shut the door of either room; for my lock, with no knob to it, looked as if it wanted to be wound up, and though the handle of Ada's went round and round with the greatest smoothness, it was attended with no effect whatever on the door. Therefore, I proposed to the children that they should come in and be very good at my table, and I would tell them the story of 'Little Red Riding Hood' while I dressed."

Downstairs they went again to the discomfort of a smoking fire, but *Mrs. Jellyby* only shrugged her shoulders, smiled good-naturedly, and went on writing letters about Africa, while her guests choked and coughed in the room beyond.

Richard Carstone, who was also one of the *Jarndyce* wards, had a room upstairs, and his experience was rather amusing; he had washed his hands in a pie-dish, and the missing kettle had been found on his dressing-table.

They went downstairs to dinner very carefully, for the stair carpets were so torn that they were dangerous. The dinner — *Esther* tells us — would have been excellent had it been well cooked, but it was almost raw, and it was rather discouraging to find a missing dish of potatoes tucked away in the coal scuttle.

All the little *Jellybys* took to the newcomers. *Peepy,* the baby, would not leave *Esther's* lap; poor little fellow, she probably gave him his very first "mothering," as *Mrs. Jellyby* was too much interested in the welfare of the little Africans to have time for anything else; if *Peepy* had been a little African, he would have fared better.

Esther and *Ada* gathered the children around them after dinner, and while *Mrs. Jellyby* went on writing letters, the girls whispered the story of Puss-in-Boots to the youngsters in the corner. *Esther* carried *Peepy* upstairs to bed, while the slovenly servant "charged into the midst of the little family, like a dragon, and turned them into cribs," and when the tired girls sought their own beds at midnight, they left *Mrs. Jellyby* "among her papers, drinking coffee, and Miss Jellyby biting the feather of her pen."

Dickens was a wonderful artist, and, though he rarely painted a landscape, his interiors were always exceptionally good, and this picture of bad housekeeping was surely enough to make one shudder. He often showed us poor housekeeping, where the

small housekeeper made the most of her meager surroundings, but *Mrs. Jellyby,* or more properly poor *Caddy,* could have made a happy home for the little *Jellybys,* if her wishes had been granted and Africa had been blotted from the map.

There was another little housekeeper in this same book; her name was *Charlotte Neckett,* familiarly known as *Charley,* and she lived up "three-pair back" in a room that hugged the roof, and she was only thirteen — and she went out washing by the day — and she took care of a tiny brother and sister, for they were orphans.

The room was poor and bare, and the food was often scarce, but *Charley* had just that knack which Dickens loved so in his girls; her capable hands were never idle, and there was an air of home even in the poor garret, with its one chair and its big uncomfortable bed. And how she cared for the two children! It was beautiful to see her, for Dickens made these poor little hard-working girls of flesh and blood, and beside them his other girls looked like shadowy little creatures.

But we must not forget that, in writing of girls, Dickens had only a few types from which to choose. With him, it was either the good little angel — too good almost — or the little slavey, or the pretty, plump, middle-class little maid, who happened to have a perfect genius for housekeeping. The little narrow-chested girls of his period had no tennis to broaden them, no rowing, no basket-ball, no golf.

They were simply little home bodies, whose mission it was to make happiness, to find a suitable mate, to marry, and to have a family.

In rapid succession throughout his other books Dickens has introduced us to innumerable girls, whose charm has endured all these years — even to this day, when the athletic, vigorous, brainy young girl puts the quiet home-mouse to shame. There is an atmosphere of sweet lavender about these little heroines of long ago, while the jingle of their key-basket is a sound we like to hear.

In 1854 "Hard Times" was published in weekly installments in *Household Words*. It was a very grave and serious story, a tragedy of the poor, whose cause Dickens always championed. In *Louisa Gradgrind* and *Sissy Jupe* we have a curious contrast of little girlhood; the one brought up on Facts, the other living in the glare of a traveling "two-penny" circus. No housekeeping keys jingled in the little baskets of either, for *Sissy* had no home, and *Louisa* lived only behind four walls, where everything was classified, and where the least human emotion had a pin stuck through it and was popped into a cabinet.

Sissy, on the other hand, lived on her little emotions; true — her father was only a clown, but he was very good to the little girl, and, though she never saw him after he disappeared from Coketown, he was always in her memory. She it was who entered the *Gradgrind's* home, where hard facts were

the only emotions, and the beating of her warm little heart was heard through the stone walls. Her real name was *Cecilia Jupe;* her friends called her *Sissy* and *Mr. Gradgrind* always said *Jupe,* as he considered *Sissy* no name at all, and *Cecilia* too high-sounding and sentimental. But somehow or other the sweet presence of this little girl was the only light in this sorrowful story. She became in truth the capable housekeeper of the *Gradgrind* establishment — the only hearty and wholesome creature within it.

"Hard Times" was short, but it was powerful enough to be a masterpiece. Dickens wrote it from his heart, and it reached thousands of readers through *Household Words.*

Our next little housekeeper grew up in the shadow of a prison wall, the old Marshalsea prison, which Dickens had cause to know so well. "Little Dorrit" was the title of his next book, and the name by which his charming heroine was known among her friends and within the prison itself, where she was born.

A poor house to keep was this bare debtor's prison, where her father had dwelt for three and twenty years, but it was the only home *Little Dorrit* had ever known, and she managed to bring a bit of her own quiet sunshine into the dingy rooms. Everything that love and sacrifice could do was done for the broken old man, her father, and when sudden, unexpected wealth unlocked their prison doors,

she was always the same quiet, helpful, home child, always hovering near her father, sparing him when she could, creating around him the atmosphere of home wherever they went.

A quiet, uneventful life would have been the portion of *Amy Dorrit* if she had not lived in a Story — but, being in a Story, and one of Dickens's stories, she had to be mixed up in a Plot, though her own faithful heart throbbed just the same behind the walls of the Marshalsea, or in the gilded elegance of the foreign hotels where *Fanny Dorrit,* the elder sister, always liked to settle.

Arthur Clennam, the middle-aged hero — and very old for his age he was, too — was a man who all his life had hungered for love. He was a young man still, as years count — what are forty years to vigorous manhood — but life had been grave for him; he had not lived in prison, it is true, but for darkness and dreariness the *Clennam* mansion might have come close to the Marshalsea, and that he and *Little Dorrit,* of all people, should have come together, seemed a most wonderful and unheard-of thing; but then Dickens was a wizard, and wizards can do remarkable things, and *Little Dorrit* being made to love and console, and a born housekeeper into the bargain, why, what more natural than this pretty love story of the Marshalsea.

There is another girl in "Little Dorrit" who interests us keenly; a turbulent, fly-away bit of passion, resentful of the fact that she was only a foundling.

This was *Tattycoram,* the little maid in the *Meagles* family, and, as dear old *Mr. Meagles* explained, she came by her name in the Foundling Institution, in a most peculiar way. On entering, she was listed as *Harriet Beadle.* The *Meagleses* called her *Hatty* at first, and then *Tatty,* "because, as practical people, we thought even a playful name might be a new thing to her, and might have a softening and affectionate kind of effect, don't you see. . . . The name of Beadle being out of the question, and the originator of the Institution for these poor foundlings having been a blessed creature of the name of Coram, we gave that name to Pet's little maid. At one time she was Tatty, at one time she was Coram, until we got into a way of mixing the two names together, and now she is always Tattycoram."

Pet Meagles — Christian name *Minnie* — is still another dainty bit of girlhood, but she is shadowy and somewhat unnatural compared with *Tattycoram.* One cannot imagine the household keys jingling in *Pet's* small basket, while *Tattycoram,* in spite of her black moods, was a capable, neat-handed little maid, and we may be quite sure that when she returned, penitent, to the *Meagles's* home, she became the most dutiful and conscientious of housekeepers. When she went with *Mr.* and *Mrs. Meagles* to see *Little Dorrit, Mr. Meagles* said gently:

"'Tattycoram, come to me a moment, my good girl.'

"She went up to the window.

"'You see that young lady who was here just now — that little quiet, fragile figure passing along there, Tatty? Look! the people stand out of the way to let her go by. The men — see the poor shabby fellows pull off their hats to her, quite politely, and now she glides in at that doorway. See her, Tattycoram?'

"'Yes, sir.'

"'I have heard tell, Tatty, that she was once regularly called the child of this place. She was born here, and lived here many years. A doleful place to be born and bred in, Tattycoram.'

"'Yes, indeed, sir!'

"'If she had constantly thought of herself, and settled with herself that everybody visited this place upon her, turned it against her, and cast it at her, she would have led an irritable and probably a useless existence. Yet I have heard tell, Tattycoram, that her young life has been one of active resignation, goodness and noble service. Shall I tell you what I consider those eyes of hers, that were here just now, to have always looked at to get real expression?'

"'Yes, if you please, sir.'

"'Duty, Tattycoram. Begin it early and do it well; and there is no antecedent to it, in any origin or station, that will tell against us with the Almighty, or with ourselves.'"

Which was just Dickens's way of using Tennyson's poetic idea:

> Kind hearts are more than coronets,
> And simple faith than Norman blood —

and also Dickens's way of showing what a deeply sincere and religious man he was.

"Little Dorrit," like all its predecessors, came out in installments (the usual twenty) with the usual forty illustrations by Hablot K. Browne (Phiz). It commenced in December, 1855, and was concluded in June, 1857, parts nineteen and twenty forming a double number; and, as usual, it stirred the public as only Dickens could stir them.

Between "Little Dorrit" and "A Tale of Two Cities" many changes came into the author's life. *Household Words* had sunk in the newly conceived periodical which was called *All the Year Round,* and "A Tale of Two Cities" came out in the magazine in feverish weekly installments, commencing with the birth of the magazine, April 30, 1859, and ending November 26, of the same year. This is probably Dickens's very highest effort at story-telling, written, too, at a period which marked a serious turning-point in his life, a period when the mature and thoughtful man gave his whole heart to the work.

We cannot tell if *Lucie Manette* was ever an accomplished little housekeeper. We only know that the people of those times were more busily engaged in keeping their heads than their houses,

and even the jingling of an innocent basket of keys might have been regarded with suspicion.

In 1860 "Great Expectations" began in *All the Year Round* and continued in weekly installments. It was a queer, weird story, with certainly nothing to recommend it in the housekeeping line. But it was written at Gad's Hill, which he had recently purchased, and teems with vivid descriptions of the beautiful Kentish country. And *Satis House,* where *Miss Havisham* lived, was really a stately edifice in Rochester. That very rich, grim, and peculiar lady, who wore her bridal veil every night, and gazed with hollow eyes at her mouldy bride-cake, baked so many years ago, was the only householder of any distinction in the neighborhood, and her housekeeping was none of the best.

It is strange that Dickens's fancy should have taken this weird flight; the only thing true to nature was the small boy, *Pip,* the echo of himself, whose little vagabond feet wandered, as his had done long years ago, about the Kentish hills. There was more of the open in this story — more of the green growing things — more of the stars — though little enough of the sun. One does not look for a cheery hearth, a singing kettle, in the gloomy state *Miss Havisham* kept; and even *Pip's* sister, *Joe's* wife, was too much of a scold to make home happy. The only girls in the story are little *Biddy* and *Estella,* but there was nothing homelike or natural in their surroundings, and certainly not once through

" Great Expectations " do we hear the jingle of the housekeeper's keys.

But in " Our Mutual Friend," his last long novel, all this was changed. The author seemed to regain touches of his youth in the telling of this story — this wonderful, mysterious story, which time only mellows. To the girl just touching her teens, it is an absolutely thrilling story. The coiling and coiling of the intricate plot, the slow unfolding of the mystery, are of almost breathless interest, and Dickens has not forgotten to carry us to the homes of these people, and give us a seat at their tables or before their fires. And above all he has given us delicious glimpses of girls at their very sweetest and best, and the jingle of the little housekeeper's keys can be distinctly heard throughout the tale.

The daughter of a longshoreman is our first little housekeeper. *Lizzie Hexam* was her name, and her father, an evil-looking man named *Jesse Hexam,* earned his living by dragging the river for dead bodies and other wreckage, in consequence of which he was known as the bird of prey, and for many reasons was an important character. He lived with his two children, *Charley* and *Lizzie,* in a rotten, tumble-down house close to the water's edge.

" The low building had the look of having once been a mill. There was a rotten wart of wood upon its forehead, that seemed to indicate where

the sails had been, but the whole was very distinctly seen in the obscurity of the night."

The door of this house opened into a circular room, and it was here that *Lizzie* — a lonely, loving, and very pretty girl, spent many hours of her life trying to make the old place homelike for her father and brother, trying to forget the dark, sluggish river outside, and the gruesome things her father fished out of it, looking into the heart of the genial fire she managed to keep, and seeing wonderful pictures in the glow of its embers. She was always a mother to the boy, and in return he gave her the affection of a young cub, and her sweet and gracious presence in this dark, dilapidated house made a real home for the two she loved best in the world.

Brought up in the shadow of ignorance and even sin, without a handful of knowledge to help her in the world, without knowing even how to read or write, *Lizzie Hexam* bloomed into a radiant creature during the course of the story.

In the midst of the family of *R. Wilfer, Esquire,* was a rosebud, and how it flourished among so many strange companions — who can tell; but *Miss Bella Wilfer* was certainly a rose-bud, and the parent stem was certainly not a rose-bush. This charming young person, who had no home to speak of with respect until she married *John Rokesmith,* became, in due course of time, one of the dearest and daintiest of housekeepers in the whole of

"Dickens-Land." The haven of bliss that she made for that lucky young man could scarcely be conceived, even though Dickens's pen painted the cheery place in glowing colors. Since the days of *Mrs. Dot,* he has never drawn a daintier picture, and the fact that *Mrs. Bella* is an important personage, indeed, a *most important* personage, only adds to the pleasing sketch.

To say too much of this charming *Mrs. Rokesmith* would be to tell the story, and this is one story which only Dickens can tell; the barest outline would disfigure some part of the plot, so we can only say "hands off" to the clumsy folk who would try to describe it. Let the girls read it for themselves, it is well worth the trouble, only don't try to guess the mystery — you won't find out — and don't look at the end — it will spoil everything, believe me.

And now for the best and dearest and last of the little housekeepers — *Miss Jenny Wren,* the doll's dressmaker. She, also, peeps from between the covers of "Our Mutual Friend," and she is chiefly remarkable for being the "mother" of a very troublesome "child" — her own drunken, irresponsible father.

Her real name was *Fanny Cleaver,* but, being small and misshapen, the name of *Jenny Wren* was far better suited to the bright eyes and sharp little young-old face that peeped out from a glorious mass of golden hair — her one beauty.

Her back was bad and her legs were queer, she explained to any visitor who chanced that way, but in all other respects she was a most capable and breezy young person. "The person of the house," as she called herself, sat always in a low arm-chair with a sort of work-bench before it, and pursued her daily occupation as doll's dressmaker.

"'I hope it's a good business,'" suggested a visitor.

"The person of the house shrugged her shoulders and shook her head. 'No, poorly paid. And I'm so often pressed for time. I had a doll married last week and was obliged to work all night. . . . And they take no care of their clothes, and they never keep to the same fashion a month. I work for a doll with three daughters. Bless you, she's enough to ruin her husband!'

"The person of the house gave a weird little laugh here, and gave them another look out of the corners of her eyes. She had an elfin chin which was capable of great expression, and whenever she gave this look, she hitched this chin up. As if her eyes and her chin worked together on the same wires."

She looked a mere child, yet the odd little creature hated children, possibly because they made fun of her.

"'Don't talk of children,'" cried the person of the house. "'I can't bear children, *I* know their tricks and their manners. . . .

"'Always running about and screeching, always playing and fighting, always skip, skip, skipping on the pavement and chalking it for their games. Oh! *I* know their tricks and their manners. . . . And that's not all. Ever so often calling names in through a person's key-hole, and imitating a person's back and legs. Oh! *I* know their tricks and their manners!'"

And no doubt she did, poor child.

"It was difficult to guess the age of this strange creature, for her poor figure furnished no clue to it and her face was at once so young and so old. Twelve or at the most, thirteen, might have been near the mark.

"'I always did like grown-ups,' she went on, 'and always kept company with them. So sensible. Sit so quiet. Don't go prancing and capering about! And I mean always to keep among none but grown-ups till I marry. I suppose I must make up my mind to marry one of these days!'"

Thus the person of the house — and she spoke words of wisdom in her shrill, sharp way, and she kept the house tidy, and earned money at her quaint little trade, sitting there day after day, among her dolls, chatting about them — thinking about them — and shaping her own life as her dexterous fingers fashioned the tiny work for her doll patrons. She hated strongly, she loved strongly, but duty was stronger than all else, and she cared for her drunken father, in her odd, motherly way, until a happy acci-

dent put an end to his worthless life, and then *Miss Jenny Wren* forgot what he had been, and mourned for what she would have liked him to be — like the true little woman that she was.

Dickens has never given us a finer little character; there is so much to say about it, but so much in connection with the story that it does not seem quite fair to tell it here, so we can only leave her with the keys in her capable hands, limping about and laying out a supper for her "bad boy," or listening for the light step of *Lizzie Hexam,* who became her dearest friend.

And so, year by year, in his chivalrous, fatherly way, Dickens paid his tribute to girls. These small women had not yet learned to take their places in the world, as they have to-day, but Dickens probed deeper below the surface than most writers of his time, and the girls he gave to his readers were something more than the colorless little beings who folded their hands and spoke when spoken to.

Could he have seen our girls of to-day — with their sensible ideas, their healthy sports, their fearless, straightforward glances, what wonders he could have accomplished in putting their portraits upon his canvas!

PART IV.

THE MAN WHO MADE THE BOOKS.

CHAPTER XIII.

DICKENS, THE MANY-SIDED.

SO far we have tried to look upon Charles Dickens as the great author of his day, and we can grasp with certainty the fact that his books were his greatest monument, because the man who can give his thoughts to the world and let them live after him has no need of anything more substantial in the way of a monument. But when we consider the many sides of this very remarkable man, we cannot help wondering how — with such a limited span of life — he managed to accomplish what he did.

"Our Mutual Friend" came out in the usual twenty monthly parts, commencing May, 1864, the final number issued in November, 1865; but some of it had a close call. In June, 1865, after a short holiday trip into France, Dickens was returning to London by train when a frightful accident occurred. The train ran off the rails, and Dickens was in the only carriage that was not overturned; it was caught in the bridge in some marvelous way, and he was of the few who escaped without injury. He was very active in the work of rescue, and went about bravely, without a thought for himself, until

suddenly he remembered that he had left the manuscript of a number of "Our Mutual Friend" in the deserted carriage, out of which he had crawled and assisted two ladies who had shared his compartment. Without hesitating for a moment, he clambered back and rescued some of his best characters from total destruction. He says in a "postscript" which he wrote in place of a "preface" to this story: "I remember with devout thankfulness that I can never be much nearer parting company with my readers forever than I was then, until there shall be written against my life, the two words with which I have this day closed this book — *The End.*"

There is no doubt that Dickens's vigorous constitution received a shock from which it never recovered; it is equally certain that his heart beat most irregularly at times, and never afterwards was he able to travel on the railway without a certain nervous strain.

We must not forget, however, in considering Charles Dickens as an author, that we have spoken particularly of his work as a novelist, putting far into the background the innumerable short stories and sketches which completely filled the intervals; for Dickens was renowned as a short story writer, many of his best being modestly tucked away in the unsigned columns of *Household Words* and *All the Year Round.*

The first number of *Household Words* made its appearance on Saturday, March 30, 1850. Dick-

ens was Editor-in-chief, and his friend, W. H. Wills, was sub-editor and manager. The new periodical was hailed with delight by its world of English readers, though looking at the unpretentious bound volumes, we cannot help comparing them with the magazines of to-day, with their artistic illustrations and attractive covers, and wondering wherein lay the charm, for we could not even trace the work of a favorite author, so securely was he hidden. It is only within recent years that Dickens himself has been traced through the columns, and in many cases the writings of other people have been laid at his door, because, in editing their contributions, he very often inserted paragraphs of his own, which, while improving the author's style immensely, seemed, nevertheless, to have Dickens's stamp, and later were actually reprinted with his name.

The magazine was a great success — great enough to satisfy even Dickens's ambition. And it showed his wonderful powers as an editor, for no smallest detail was neglected by him. Even though the magazine ran side by side with some of his most notable novels, he always had time to attend faithfully to his office work. Indeed, no one could work as hard or play as hard as Charles Dickens. Everything he did was thoroughly done, and when the magazine changed its name to *All the Year Round,* the same active care and interest marked its career. The trouble was, he was constantly doing; his brain

ran a race with his restless, active body, a mark of genius which must have been very trying to those around him.

Dickens's love for the stage was well-known, and that he was an actor of more than usual merit we have seen in studying his life. There has been neither time nor space to write at length on this most important side of his character; we only know that, whenever there was an opportunity to act, Dickens acted. Many have wondered if a great actor was not overshadowed by a great writer, and the fact that he often delivered prologues before the curtain, for his friend Macready, shows that that renowned actor certainly considered him quite above the average.

Indefatigable he was, too, as a stage manager; patient, good-humored, untiring, and at all times a gentleman; "he exerted his authority firmly and perpetually, but in such a manner as to make it universally felt to be for no purpose of self-assertion or self-importance; on the contrary — to be for the sole purpose of insuring general success to their united efforts."

As an actor his line was comedy, and the part of *Captain Bobadil,* the braggart in "Every Man in his Humour," was remarkable for its finished work.

"Every Man in his Humour" was given for a Shakespeare benefit, and in the cast were three of the Dickens brothers, Frederick, Charles, and

Augustus (the original "Boz" we remember), and several of Dickens's most intimate friends, Mark Lemon, John Forster, John Leech, and George Cruikshank. This play was followed by a farce, "Love, Law, and Physic," in which Charles and Frederick also took part.

There was one special performance of "Every Man in his Humour" given at Knebworth Park, Lord Lytton's family mansion, in which Mrs. Charles Dickens was to have played, had she not been disabled by an accident, when Mrs. Mark Lemon kindly took her place. The Epilogue on this occasion makes humorous reference to all the players. Here is a part:

> Amongst the party there are pretty pickin's!
> But say, can newspaper describe Charles Dickens?
> Author and actor; manager; the soul
> Of all who read or hear him! on the whole
> A very *Household Word.*

Reference is then made to the accident which prevented the appearance of Mrs. Dickens.

> *Wellbred.* Now how about the ladies?
> *Knowell.* For my part
> I've got their perfection all by heart.
> *Wellbred.* Hush, what would Dickens say to such sweet word?
> *Knowell.* Why, that the lady emulates her lord.
> A word on her sad accident; but quite
> Impromptu, not intended for to-night.
> Oh, may she soon recover from her sprain,

To tread with us, her friends, these boards again.

Wellbred. That fall sank all our spirits; but in need
'Tis said a friend is found, a friend indeed!
Successful friendship has our cares allayed.

Knowell. Ay, and the case relieved by *Lemon-aid.*

When Dickens belonged to the Guild of Dramatic Literature and Art, he acted many times, and in the adaptation of his own story, "Mr. Nightingale's Diary," he was specially delightful as *Mr. Gabblewig,* the over-talkative barrister. He was fond of doing some of his better known characters, and *Sam Weller* and *Mrs. Gamp* ("not the real Mrs. Gamp but a near relation") were special favorites.

He took a great interest in cultivating a dramatic spirit among his children, and there were many Twelfth Night celebrations at Tavistock House, in honor of the younger Charles's birthday. Indeed, the children's theatricals were given there each year "until the principal actors ceased to be children."

"Tom Thumb" was given in 1854, and "Fortunio" in 1855. Mark Lemon and Dickens himself took prominent parts in both plays, while Mark Lemon's own clever children and Dickens's tribe of youngsters added their share to the fun. Dickens called his friend "The Infant Phenomenon" and himself "The Modern Garrick," and the entertainments on both occasions went with smoothness and spirit. At one of these performances the ballad of *Miss Villikins,* written by Dickens, was sung

with such effect that Thackeray, who was present, rolled off his seat in a burst of laughter.

The play of "Fortunio" was advertised in the most absurd manner on a large lettered board. "Re-engagement of that irresistible comedian, Mr. Ainger!" "Re-appearance of Mr. H., who created so powerful an impression last year!" "Return of Mr. Charles Dickens, Jun. from his German engagements!" "Engagement of Miss Kate, who declined the munificent offers of the Management last season!" "Mr. Passé, Mr. Mudperiod, Mr. Measly Servile, and Mr. Wilkini Collini!" "First appearance, on any stage, of Mr. Plornish-marootigoonter (who has been kept out of bed at a vast expense)." The last performer mentioned was yet some distance from the third year of his age. Dickens was Mr. Passé.

In 1855, "The Lighthouse" was also produced at Tavistock House. Wilkie Collins wrote the play, and Stanfield, the artist, painted the drop-scene, which was "an exquisite picture of Eddystone as it stood in those days . . . and the actors were exhibited throughout as shut up in a little room within the lighthouse, also of Mr. Stanfield's painting, which from its nature could with the best possible effect be set up in a private drawing-room, or on a miniature stage."

The principal character, an old lighthouse man, was played wonderfully by Dickens, in a most picturesque manner, arousing great enthusiasm.

A year later, "The Frozen Deep," also by Wilkie Collins, was produced at Tavistock House, and in preparation for this very ambitious piece the house was literally turned upside-down. The schoolroom was transformed into a theater; it took quite three months to accomplish this; to lay the pipes for proper lighting, to paint appropriate scenery, and to train the children.

In the meantime, as he wrote to his friend Macready, on December 13, 1856: "You may faintly imagine, my venerable friend, the occupation of these also grey hairs, between 'Golden Marys,' 'Little Dorrits,' 'Household Wordses,' four stage carpenters entirely boarding on the premises, a carpenter's shop erected in the back garden, size (a sort of wash) always boiling over on all the lower fires, Stanfield perpetually elevated on planks, and splashing himself from head to foot, Telbin requiring impossibilities of smart gasmen, and a legion of prowling nondescripts forever shrinking in and out. Calm amidst the wreck, your aged friend glides away on the 'Dorrit' stream, forgetting the uproar for a stretch of hours, refreshing himself with a ten or twelve mile walk, pitches head foremost into foaming rehearsals, placidly emerges for editorial purposes, smokes over buckets of distemper with Mr. Stanfield aforesaid, again calmly floats upon the 'Dorrit' waters."

So we see, in spite of the noise and confusion, with "a painter's shop in the schoolroom; a gas-

fitter's shop all over the basement; a dressmaker's shop at the top of the house; a tailor's shop in my dressing-room"— still "Little Dorrit" went on undisturbed, in order that the public might receive the usual monthly number, and everything that could be done to make the new play a success was done without a thought of trouble or inconvenience.

Special invitations were issued to their friends, but the house — roomy as it was — was not big enough to hold the ninety-three people at first invited, and so the play had to be repeated several times, in order that all might enjoy it.

"The Frozen Deep" was a true success, though only amateurs took part. Wilkie Collins says of it:

"Mr. Dickens himself played the principal part, and played it with a truth, vigour, and pathos, never to be forgotten by those who were fortunate enough to witness the performance."

We might go on throughout this chapter and through many more, giving interesting accounts of Dickens's theatrical experiences. It all goes to prove that his knowledge of drama and the stage showed its influence in his various novels, for all — without exception — were written in a dramatic style, and most of them were afterwards arranged as plays, though not always in a way to please the author.

The first dramatic arrangement was a three-act version of "Pickwick," entitled "Sam Weller, or the Pickwickians." The perpetrator of this direful

deed was William Moncrieff, a well-known theatrical tinker, and the play was produced at the Theater Royal, on July 10, 1837. Poor Dickens! He could only tear his hair and rave in the newspapers, but there was no legal way in which to stop the man, who openly acknowledged that he had not only appropriated the author's idea, but had tampered with it in such a way that Dickens did not know his own child. While, as to "Sam Weller," the playwright openly considered it "a character, by the by, which I should think was only an afterconception of its creator, and formed no part of his original projection." In other words, that *Sam Weller,* as we know him and delight in him, got into the book quite by accident, and that Dickens had nothing to do with him.

The adaptation was thoroughly ridiculous, especially the ending, which represented the accession of Queen Victoria, where the Populace in holiday clothes "listen to some dialogue between Mr. Pickwick and Sam; and then join all the characters in a loyal chorus to the air of Auber's 'God Save the King, Gustavus,' during the singing of which, a *'Procession of Heralds, Beef-eaters, Guards, etc., are seen passing through Temple Bar to proclaim the Accession of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, and the piece concluded amidst general shouts of joy and congratulations, with tableau!'*"

Think of our dear old, unobtrusive, inoffensive "Pickwick," with such an ending!

This did not deter Moncrieff from dramatizing "Nicholas Nickleby" before it was completed, but here Dickens revenged himself by introducing the character of "the literary gentleman" in the farewell supper given to *Mr. Vincent Crummles,* and giving Moncrieff some hard slaps.

Mr. Edward Stirling, another "adaptor," fared better with "Nicholas Nickleby." This play was produced at the Adelphi Theater, on November 19, 1838, and lasted for one hundred and sixty nights. Dickens had been able to sit through this performance, and to enjoy some parts of it. There was another excellent adaptation in 1875, and in 1885 a "sketch" was given, in which a talented American actor, Mr. John S. Clarke, gave a wonderful impersonation of *Newman Noggs.* Mr. Stirling, in his interesting book, "Old Drury Lane," gives a humorous account of one performance of his version, at Worthing:

"For my benefit," he tells us, "'Nicholas Nickleby' was announced. Without the 'Dotheboys Hall' scholars, this performance could not, however, take place. And here was the awkward dilemma. Worthing mothers of the poorer class did not countenance play-acting, believing Old Nick to be in some way connected with it.

"There happened to be in this village an old barber, who did many things besides shaving, for a living; among his accomplishments he was a performer on the French Horn, and had very much

the same influence over the children as did the Pied Piper of Hamlin. The manager of the company explained his need of children for that one scene. The barber said:

"'I'll get you fifty, sir, never fear.'

"And he was as good as his word. Lured from the by-streets and alleys by his horn . . . the small fry followed him to the theater yard; once there the gates were closed upon *Mr. Squeers's* children. Amidst crying and moaning, they were placed on the stage, sitting on benches . . . poor children, completely bewildered. When the treacle was administered, most of them cried. This delighted the audience, thinking it so natural (so it was). At nine o'clock, the act over, our cruel barber threw open the gates, driving his flock out with a pleasant intimation of what they would catch when they arrived home. Mothers, fathers, sisters, in wild disorder had been scouring the town for their runaways, and the police were completely puzzled and at their wits' ends, at such a wholesale kidnapping."

"Pickwick" was never a success as a play, but the *Jingle* of Henry Irving will always be remembered. The only pity was that Dickens could not have seen this splendid piece of acting.

There was a dramatization of "The Old Curiosity Shop" at the Adelphi in the early days, when Yates played *Quilp,* and Mrs. Keeley was the *Little Nell.* This has always been a favorite subject, and

there were some excellent versions of it in later years. A great pitfall to many ambitious actresses was the attempt to play both the *Marchioness* and *Little Nell;* "the result has always been disastrous to one or the other of the two characters, and sometimes to both. Poor *Nell,* however, has generally been the greater sufferer."

"Martin Chuzzlewit" has also been "adapted," and the funny thing about this is — that *Sairey Gamp* and *Betsey Prig* have always been star parts for men.

Mr. Stirling dramatized the "Carol" with Dickens's consent. He tells us:

"Dickens attended several rehearsals, furnishing valuable suggestions. Thinking to make *Tiny Tim* (a pretty child) more effective, I ordered a set of irons and bandages for his supposed weak leg. When Dickens saw this tried on the child, he took me aside:

"'No, Stirling, no, this won't do! remember how painful it would be to many of the audience having crippled children.'"

In 1846, "The Cricket on the Hearth" was produced at the Lyceum, and an English critic says of it:

"That the Cricket might be served up quite warm to the play-going public, Mr. Charles Dickens supplied the dramatist, Mr. Albert Smith, with proof-sheets, hot from the press. On the evening of the morning, therefore, on which the book was pub-

lished, its dramatic version was produced; and as the Adaptor stuck very closely indeed to the text of the original, of course it succeeded."

Dickens's characters were all so natural that they lived of themselves without any help from other people, and lived, too, when dramatists and actors had done their worst, and those who tried to set his compositions to rights have done little or no harm; but the wise person who stuck to the text, remembering that Dickens was a master, was sure of success; and the result was that in this notable performance, which charms us even to-day, the actors were lost in the characters which seemed to have walked out of the book, throbbing with the life the author put into them.

"Oliver Twist" has been "adapted" many times, but the first version was enough to try the patience of a saint; the ending was enough to rouse the ire of a meeker man than Charles Dickens.

"*Mr. Brownlow.* And what is now wanted to complete the happiness of Oliver Twist?

"*Oliver.* First that you will erect a small white tablet in the church near which my poor mother died, and on it grave the name of Agnes. There might be no coffin in that tomb; but if the spirits of the dead ever come back to earth to visit spots hallowed by their love, I do believe that the shade of my poor mother will often hover about this solemn nook, though it is a church and she was weak and erring.

"*Mr. Brownlow.* The next request I will make for you, dear Oliver, myself, and will make it here — to you (the audience). Our hero is but young; but if his simple progress has beguiled you of a smile, or his sorrows of a tear, forgive the errors of the orphan boy, Oliver Twist. (Tableau.)"

Is it any wonder that at this representation of "Oliver Twist" at the Surrey Theater, in 1838, "Dickens is said to have laid himself down in a corner of the box, and to have risen only when the curtain had fallen."

The French idea of "Nicholas Nickleby" was laughable; facts had to give way so often to the French idioms that the writer and his characters seem to disappear entirely.

Mr. Pemberton says, in his book on Dickens and the Stage, that he once saw a stage version of "Little Dorrit" "in which the Father of the Marshalsea inherits a title and is called Sir William Dorrit; and an adaptation of 'Dombey and Son' in which poor *Paul* is stolen by *Mrs. Brown,* and meets with his death while endeavoring to escape by way of the roof, from that good lady's house!"

Mr. Halliday wrote a play founded on "Dombey and Son" and called it "Heart's Delight," *Captain Cuttle's* name for *Florence;* and an adaptation of "David Copperfield" called "Little Em'ly."

We might give countless instances of dramatization, more or less successful, of Dickens's books,

but there have been only a few of sufficient merit to live side by side with the originals. The "Cricket," "The Chimes," and "The Carol," have good, enduring stuff in them. There is a very modern version of "A Tale of Two Cities" called "The Only Way," which holds its own, and several actresses of note have created wonderful character studies out of *Nancy Sikes,* with the necessary background of "Oliver Twist."

There have been *Pickwicks* and *Jingles* and *Sam Wellers,* and *Mrs. Dots,* and *Little Nells* and *Marchionesses,* and *Florence Dombeys* and *Little Em'lys* and *Dame Durdens,* and *Jenny Wrens,* all having their turns upon the stage, but with one or two exceptions they have done nothing in the way of immortalizing Dickens's works. For the works of a master need no prop — they can stand alone.

Some time in the sixties "A Christmas Carol" was played at the Adelphi, with the well-known actor, Toole, as *Bob Cratchit,* and in the *Cratchit* Christmas dinner scene, "a real roast goose and a real plum pudding were served hot every night. *Tiny Tim* was played by a somewhat emaciated little girl, who sat by the fireside and was fed with dainty morsels by the other little *Cratchits,* who clustered about the dinner-table, and who, needless to say, were as willing to play as good a knife and fork on the stage as they are supposed to do in the book. Of all the little Cratchits, however, this *Tiny Tim* was the most voracious. Like his famous

young relative, *Oliver Twist,* he always wanted 'more,' and night after night such large portions of goose and plum pudding were handed to this exacting and hungry little invalid that even the good-natured Toole grew annoyed, feeling that the poetry of the scene was being missed, and at last became absolutely angry with the child for its supposed gluttony. Being at length taken to task on the subject, poor *Tim* made a confession. The child had a sister (a not too well-fed sister) employed in the theater. The fire by which it sat was a 'stage fire,' through which anything could be easily conveyed to one waiting on the other side, and poor little *Tim's* goose and pudding were more than shared each night. When Toole told this story to Dickens, he was greatly touched, and said: 'I hope you gave the child the whole goose.'"

Mr. Toole was a famous actor in the five important Christmas Stories, a tribute he paid to the author, who was the first to give him real encouragement in his work.

But the stage and its attractions were only sidelights in Dickens's eventful life. His pen was never idle, and the real student might spend a year or more unearthing and reading his many literary efforts, which have simply not been handed down to fame because they are so numerous.

"No Thoroughfare" is a particularly notable piece of work, because it was not only written jointly by Dickens and Wilkie Collins, but written in such

a way that it was almost impossible to separate the work of the two writers.

A somewhat earlier story and a very well-known one is "The Wreck of the Golden Mary" printed in the Christmas number of *Household Words,* 1856. This story contains a beautiful "Child's Hymn" of five stanzas, written by Dickens, who did not often use his pen for serious verse. In the daily papers, and for special dinners and toasts, and once in a while in a prologue to some special play, Dickens indulged in rhyme — somewhat stilted and formal when serious — and when not in a serious vein his verses could be clever.

In 1868, a charming story for young people, called "A Holiday Romance" appeared first in America, in four parts, in *Our Young Folks,* a Boston publication edited by Ticknor and Fields, and afterwards was reprinted in *All the Year Round.* Dickens did not often write for children, but it may be interesting to know that *Our Young Folks* after a time left its Boston home and came to New York, where it changed its name to the *St. Nicholas Magazine,* by which it is known to-day.

A very charming idea is this "Holiday Romance," supposed to have been written by four children: *William Tinkling, Esquire,* aged eight; *Miss Alice Rainbird,* aged seven; *Lieutenant-Colonel Robin Redforth,* aged nine; and *Miss Nettie Ashford,* aged half-past-six, and the author has very cleverly brought out the character of each child.

William Tinkling shoulders the pen in Part First. He says:

"The beginning part is not made out of anybody's head you know. It's real. You must believe this beginning part more than what comes after else you won't understand how what comes after came to be written. You must believe it all but you must believe this most — please. I am the editor of it. Bob Redforth (he's my cousin, and shaking the table on purpose) wanted to be the editor of it; but I said he shouldn't because he couldn't. *He* has no idea of being an editor.

"Nettie Ashford is my bride. We were married in the right-hand closet in the corner of the dancing school where first we met, with a ring (a green one) from Wilkingwater's toy shop. *I* owed for it out of my pocket money. When the rapturous ceremony was over we all four went up the lane and let off a cannon (brought loaded in Bob Redforth's waistcoat pocket) to announce our nuptials. It flew right up when it went off, and turned over. Next day Lieutenant-Colonel Robin Redforth was united with similar ceremonies, to Alice Rainbird. This time the cannon burst with a most terrific explosion and made a puppy bark."

Miss Rainbird next takes up the romance. She says:

"There was once a king and he had a queen; and he was the manliest of his sex, and she was the loveliest of hers. The king was in his private pro-

fession, under government. The queen's father had been a medical man out of town.

"They had nineteen children, and were always having more. Seventeen of these children took care of the baby; and Alicia, the oldest, took care of them all. Their ages varied from seven years to seven months.

"Let us now resume our story."

Lieutenant-Colonel Robin Redforth wrote in a nautical vein with a tinge of piracy. He begins thus:

"The subject of our present narrative would appear to have devoted himself to the pirate profession at a comparatively early age. We find him in command of a splendid schooner of one hundred guns loaded to the muzzle, ere yet he had had a party in honor of his tenth birthday."

His name was Boldheart — and he was given to singing nautical melodies like the following:

Oh, landsmen are folly!
Oh, pirates are jolly!
Oh, diddleum Dolly!
Di!

Chorus — Heave yo!

Miss Nettie Ashford is responsible for Part Four, beginning:

"There is a country which I will show you when I get into maps, where the children have everything their own way. It is a most delightful country to

live in. The grown-up people are obliged to obey the children, and are never allowed to sit up to supper except on their birthdays. The children order them to make jam, and jelly, and marmalade, and tarts, and pies, and puddings, and all manner of pastry. If they say they won't, they are put into the corner till they do. They are sometimes allowed to have some; but when they have some, they generally have powders given to them afterwards."

We can certainly tell from the foregoing paragraphs exactly what sort of youngsters composed this quartette, and we can understand the fun Dickens had in writing this story.

" George Silverman's Explanation " was also written for an American magazine, *The Atlantic Monthly,* and for these stories — neither of them of an unusual length — Dickens received one thousand pounds apiece!

We might mention a long string of stories — " The Seven Poor Travelers," " The Haunted House," " Tom Tiddler's Ground," " Somebody's Luggage," " Mrs. Lirriper's Lodgings," " Mrs. Lirriper's Legacy," " Dr. Marigold's Prescriptions," " Mugby Junction," all of which appeared in *All the Year Round,* and we would find among these many clever and amusing things, for everything Dickens touched bore the unmistakable stamp of wholesome humor.

There is yet another side to this remarkable man,

and that is his gift of oratory. It made of him a most convincing lecturer, and it opened still another channel for his talents. He became a public interpreter and reader of his own works, and under the management of Mr. George Dolby made most successful tours through Great Britain and America.

Never before had such a scheme suggested itself, and it proved to be as popular as it was original. Dickens's fine reading would have pleased an audience, regardless of the text; but when he read one of his own books and threw into the telling scenes all the emotion which had prompted the original writing, nothing could have been more inspiring. There were selections from "Dombey," "Nickleby," "Pickwick," "Oliver Twist," "The Carol," "The Cricket," "The Chimes," "Dr. Marigold's Prescriptions," and many others.

The period of these readings (1867–1868) covered a period of declining health, and Mr. Dolby, who was his business manager as well as his personal friend, had a great responsibility in arranging his various appearances before the public. He was curiously afflicted, during his American tour, with loss of voice just before or just after the reading, but in some miraculous way it invariably returned when he had reached his desk, and faced his task and his audience.

In America the rush to hear him was unprecedented; people fought for tickets at any price, and the waiting line in front of the box-office was

half a mile long. Mr. Dolby's book is full of humorous recollections of this tour, of which the following anecdote is a fair sample:

During the progress of a reading in Boston, Mr. Dolby was engaged in conversation with one of his staff at the foot of the stairs leading to the hall, when his attention was drawn to a gentleman coming down the stairs in a most excited state. "Imagining him to be ill and wanting assistance, I said, 'What's the matter with *you?*' From the accent of his reply I concluded that he was a 'reg'lar down Easter.' 'Say, who's that man on the platform reading?'

"'Mr. Charles Dickens,' I replied.

"'But it ain't the real Charles Dickens, the man as wrote all them books I've been reading all these years.'

"'The same.'

"After a moment's pause as if for thought, he replied:

"'Wall, all I've got to say about it, then, is, that he knows no more about Sam Weller'n a cow does of pleatin' a shirt. At all events, that ain't *my* idea of Sam Weller, anyhow.'

"After the delivery of this speech, he clapped his hat on his head and left the building in a state of high dudgeon."

Is it any wonder that Dickens could not long endure the strain to which he was constantly subjecting himself. He said of himself: "I have al-

ways felt that I must, please God, die in harness." And it is good to think that he had his wish — that he did not outlive his usefulness and his activity.

He only lived two years after his return from America, but they were two full years, in spite of much pain and many break-downs; for his dream had come true — the "little boy of Long Ago" had reached the summit of Gad's Hill, and all about him lay "the purple wonder, the crimson glory" of the sunset.

CHAPTER XIV.

DICKENS AND HIS FRIENDS.

FROM his very earliest boyhood, the sunny nature and genial spirit drew around Dickens many friends. He was quick to know and to feel sympathy, and any kindness extended to him was certainly never forgotten. From the little playmates of those earlier days, to the associates of later years, one and all found him most attractive as a companion. His keen wit, even in childhood, made him a leader, and among the men and women of his time, it took its place and added to the luster of that brilliant circle.

He came into the world alongside of Tennyson and Thackeray, the youngest of the trio. Walter Scott died when Dickens was twenty, but not before his influence had been felt throughout the land. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the world of literature was illumined by flaming torches: Macaulay, Carlyle, Tennyson, Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, Bulwer-Lytton, the Brontés, The Brownings, Charles Reade, Leigh Hunt, Thomas Hood, and many lesser lights; so wherever genius burned in those early Victorian days there was sure

to be another fire not far off. It was the day of eminent statesmen and eminent painters, great singers and great actors, of spirit and stir and action everywhere, and the birth of immortal verse and prose. It was a great time in which to be born, and Dickens showed his appreciation.

With most of these writers in after days he came into personal contact, especially with Thackeray, whose writing lay along the same lines; indeed, there was a spirit of rivalry between them which was not always very friendly, but both men were too big, and in heart too kindly, to allow a serious breach. It is true that in many proved instances, Thackeray (being the later writer) without doubt founded some of his characters on those well-known Dickens's books, and at one time there was serious danger of a permanent split. Thackeray once said in a letter to one of his daughters: "There is not room for both of us in the same tree," but at the time of his death, Dickens's beautiful eulogy of his lost friend entirely wiped away the slightest bitterness.

As a young man, Dickens cared more for the society of ladies, but after his very early marriage he drew around him a brilliant circle of young men, first among them being John Forster. It is a well-known saying that without knowing Forster, one could hardly know Dickens, and it is doubtful if the great Novelist would have attained half his greatness or his power had not John Forster's calmer

judgment been ever at his elbow, advising, warning, suggesting, always unselfishly where his friend was concerned, and truly proud of every step which Dickens took towards fame.

Nothing was ever kept from Forster, and the number of horseback rides, and holiday jaunts, and family excursions, in which he had a share, showed how near he was to the very heart of Dickens's household.

Dickens's temper, while genial, was hot and quick, but all through their years of intercourse there is no record of anything like a quarrel between these friends. They disagreed on many points, as the best of friends will, but their little differences were mere matters of opinion and food for argument, in which Forster especially delighted.

Macready, the celebrated actor, was another long-tried friend. Dickens's love for the stage brought these two very close together. Indeed, both families were very intimate, and when Dickens and his wife paid their first visit to America the Macreadys took entire charge of their children.

Daniel Maclise and Clarkson Stanfield also belonged to the magic circle of close friends. Both were celebrated painters, the former a painter of portraits — the latter of large canvasses. Maclise's many portraits and sketches of Dickens himself, are celebrated, the frontispiece of this volume being a copy of the famous one which hangs in the British National Gallery.

These select spirits were always going off on holiday jaunts, like a set of overgrown boys, and such fun they had — and such larks! One particular journey into Cornwall, soon after his American tour, is described by Dickens in a letter to his American friend, Professor Felton:

"We all went down into Devonshire by the railroad, and there we hired an open carriage from an inn-keeper, patriotic in all Pickwick matters, and went on with post-horses. Sometimes we travelled all night, sometimes all day, sometimes both. I kept the joint-stock purse, ordered all the dinners, paid all the turnpikes, conducted facetious conversations with the post-boys, and regulated the pace at which we travelled. Stanfield (an old sailor) consulted an enormous map on all disputed points of way-faring, and referred, moreover, to a pocket compass and other scientific instruments. The luggage was in Forster's department, and Maclise — having nothing particular to do — sang songs."

The four were young and healthy, and enjoying themselves immensely like inconsequent schoolboys.

"If you could have witnessed," continues Dickens, "the deep devotion of the post-boys, the wild attachment of the hostlers, the maniac glee of the waiters! If you could have followed us into the earthy old churches we visited, and into the strange caverns on the gloomy seashore, and down into the depths of the mines, and up to the tops of the giddy heights, where the unspeakably green

water was roaring — I don't know how many hundred feet below! . . . I never laughed as I did on this journey; I was choking and gasping and bursting the buckle off the back of my stock all the way. And Stanfield got into such apoplectic entanglements that we were often obliged to beat him on the back with portmanteaus before we could recover him. Seriously I do believe there never was such a trip, and they made sketches, these two men (Maclise and Stanfield) in the most romantic of our halting-places, that you would have sworn we had the Spirit of Beauty with us, as well as the Spirit of Fun."

These holidays always occurred either just before or just after writing a book when he wished for a mental rest.

Another lifelong friend was Thomas Mitton, one of his fellow clerks in the early days of the law, and with whom he kept up a vigorous correspondence.

Dickens's books were so much a part of himself that his numerous illustrators had necessarily to come very close to the author in order to get the full meaning of each story. For this reason Hablot K. Browne, George Cruikshank, George Cattermole, and John Leech were on the closest and friendliest terms with the Novelist. Hablot K. Browne, who probably knew him most intimately of all, began to illustrate the fourth number of Pickwick in 1836, and was constantly associated with

Dickens until 1859, the last book he illustrated being "A Tale of Two Cities."

At the time of their first meeting he was only twenty-one, and Dickens but twenty-four; the two young men had much in common and soon became great friends. Browne was unusually quick in catching an idea, and it was lucky that he was, for Dickens shot his ideas like sky-rockets, and made the most sudden demands. He would rush in upon him, read a scene, and demand an illustration, then he would rush away without even leaving the manuscript for him to consult. It is well known that he had to make twenty-nine sketches before producing a satisfactory portrait of *Mr. Dombey*.

In the early days he was a most delightful companion, and on one occasion, in the midst of "Pickwick," Dickens picked himself up "bag and baggage," took his wife and invited Browne to join them for a short holiday in Belgium, and, before the writing of "Nickleby," he it was who joined Dickens in the pilgrimage among the Yorkshire schools. But he did not catch the contagion of Dickens's sociability. After his marriage he withdrew into the country, and even Dickens had difficulty in persuading him to spend the evening and meet a few friends. But our grandmothers can remember, when the green-backed "numbers" of the novels used to come out, how eagerly the name of "Phiz" was looked for, side by side with "Boz."

George Cruikshank was an elderly man when Dickens was beginning his career, and illustrated for him some of the "Sketches by Boz" and "Oliver Twist." They did the same sort of character work, Dickens with his pen — Cruikshank with his pencil, and one would not brook interference or suggestion from the other, so the business partnership did not last very long, though the friendship continued for many years. Dickens was frank in his admiration of Cruikshank's wonderful work.

George Cattermole was a friend of long years' standing, and more than usually intimate from the fact that his wife was a distant cousin of the Dickens family. He was twelve years older than Dickens, and supplied the illustrations for *Master Humphrey's Clock,* which, as we know, included "The Old Curiosity Shop" and "Barnaby Rudge." He was really more than a mere illustrator; he was a painter of no small power. Dickens was his great admirer as well as his friend, and trusted him implicitly in the illustration of these two picturesque stories. His letters to him were always most affectionate, brimming over with kindly, friendly interest.

Daniel Maclise had the seal of warm friendship besides the rare genius which endeared him to Dickens. Forster was the link between these two remarkable men, for he brought them together when to all three "the world was young." He

was a year older than Dickens, and he died just a few weeks before the friend, who lived long enough to pay him tribute at an Academy dinner. Here are his touching words, spoken from a heart whose restless, throbbing beats were numbered!

"The gentlest and most modest of men, the freest as to his generous appreciation of young aspirants, and the frankest and most large-hearted as to his peers, incapable of a sordid or ignoble thought, gallantly sustaining the true dignity of his vocation without a grain of self-assertion, wholesomely natural at the last as at the first, 'in wit a man — simplicity a child,' no artist of whatsoever denomination, I make bold to say, ever went to his rest having a golden memory more free from dross, or having devoted himself with a truer chivalry to the art goddess he served."

Could one man give a more glowing tribute to another than this!

Maclise designed some of the frontispieces to the Christmas books, but this was only done out of pure friendship for the author. Maclise's fame lay in his historical paintings.

John Leech, another of Dickens's illustrators was also a warm personal friend; he and Doyle were both artists for "Punch," and both did work in the Christmas books, but Leech and Dickens were much more intimate personally than through business.

The Stones, Frank and Marcus, both illustrated

for Dickens, and won his friendship. Frank illustrated "The Haunted Man," and Marcus "Our Mutual Friend."

What brought these men even more closely together was the "merry company of actors" of which Dickens was the star. Mark Lemon, the editor of "Punch," also joined the forces, and the result, as we all know, was certainly a congenial band of friends.

Mrs. Cowden Clarke, Miss Mary Boyle, Lady Blessington, Mrs. Carlyle, Miss Coutts, and his sister-in-law, Georgina Hogarth, all enjoyed the sunshine of his rare friendship, and there were numbers who partook of his charming hospitality who could be added to the list.

He made many warm friends in America, among them Professor Felton, Longfellow, Washington Irving, Mr. and Mrs. Fields; not mere acquaintances but good firm friends, who would have served him in any emergency, and of whom he always spoke affectionately.

Carlyle, he loved and admired greatly; Mrs. Carlyle not less so; and Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton was a warm personal friend. Douglas Jerrold was another friend among the happy band of actors, and Talfourd (afterwards Judge) was one of the early-day friends. Could any man fail to be something or somebody — surrounded by such friends!

We must remember, in viewing Charles Dickens with his work behind him, that he sprang origi-

nally from the great Middle Class of English folk, and that his name finally was associated only with the best and highest in the land, entirely through his own efforts and by the might of his own brilliant mind. He was as proud as a child of the position he had won, but he was never overbearing. He liked to talk about it, to tell how he had fought his way to the front, and against what great odds he had had to fight, and his keen lined face would light up with these memories — as he talked.

He liked to take his chosen friends back to his boyish haunts, to Chatham — to Rochester, he liked to invite them to Gad's Hill, and make them look down upon the sweep of Kentish country, and point out the spots where the "small queer boy" used to linger in the by-gone days. He only took his chosen intimates to these spots, hallowed by association, but many a day was spent rambling in the dear haunts, accompanied by his wife and his friends, dining or supping at the old Inns, made famous in his books.

He frequently popped his friends into his stories, and the likenesses, though often grotesque, were always clever. If the friend was sensible, he took these little jokes serenely, but Leigh Hunt was thin-skinned enough to be irritated at the excellent likeness of him in *Harold Skimpole* in "Bleak House." Walter Savage Landor, another of Dickens's special friends, was boldly drawn as *Boythorne* in the same book. And much as he admired Forster,

it is certain that in describing *Mr. Podsnap's* argumentative traits and loud insistent air in "Our Mutual Friend" he was thinking of his friend, who, like *Mr. Podsnap,* had a sweeping way of putting a disagreeable subject behind him.

"'Besides' said Mr. Podsnap, . . . 'the subject is disagreeable to me, I will go so far as to say it is an odious one.' He finished with that flourish of his arm which added more expressively than any words, 'and I remove it from the face of the earth'" and Forster, far from being angry at this caricature, rather enjoyed it.

Another friend whom Dickens admired greatly was Thomas Hood, and it may not be generally known that the famous "Song of the Shirt" had its origin in a suggestion of Dickens, who in a letter had called attention to the case of an unfortunate sempstress who made shirts at threepence apiece, and, being robbed of these hard earnings, attempted to drown herself. In the next number of Hood's magazine appeared "The Song of the Shirt."

There were certain points of resemblance between his friend, Judge Talfourd and *Tommy Traddles* of "Copperfield" fame, but the novelist's drawing of the famous *Traddles* was so tender and touching that no living original could have found fault with it.

Wilkie Collins was very intimate, not only with Dickens himself, but with his entire household.

The two were closely associated in their literary work, and their methods of writing were much alike. The two men were very congenial, and Collins's brother married Kate Dickens, with great pomp and ceremony, at Gad's Hill.

A friend to Dickens meant the whole history of friendship; once the pact was sealed, the bond was fast, and there was no trouble too great — nor sacrifice, either, for that matter — in the cause of friendship. His house was opened to his friends, and nothing in the way of hospitality was forgotten or neglected in their service, and if these friends happened to be very young, why, all the more reason for kindness and hospitality.

Of Dickens's friends among children there is absolutely no count. A child was to him a thing apart, and the small boys or girls had only to glance at the kind, keen face, with its humorous lines, and the bright, searching eyes which seemed to probe to their timid hearts, to feel sure that they had found a friend. His own large family of children drew many youngsters around them, and to all of these Dickens had the manner of a kindly boy.

In a letter to another friend, Mrs. Watson, Dickens tells of his going "gypsying" down the river with his son Charley and three of his schoolfellows, himself the biggest boy among them. He was to meet the boys at Slough, but the rain came down in torrents before he started; however, rather

than disappoint them, Dickens and a friend who volunteered to go with them took the train, accompanied by two large hampers of provisions. The boys had begun to think the grown-ups were not coming; they had been up since four, though the train was not due till eleven, but the rain had dashed their spirits. However, they soon cheered up when they saw the two gentlemen, and when the hampers came out of the luggage van they danced in wild glee. Dickens took them first to the tailor's, where they were all decked out in boating togs, then to the boat-house, where a gentleman by the name of "Mahogany"— so called on account of his sun-burnt complexion — joined the company. There was a boat with a striped awning ordered for the occasion, and into this the happy youngsters tumbled and rowed down the river.

Dickens owned that he trembled when it came to feeding hour. They dined in a field, and what those boys devoured in the way of refreshments beggared even Dickens's description; he offered up one fervent prayer that one special boy might outlive the salad he took. They all pronounced the dinner "great"; later, they took tea and rashers of bacon at a public-house, and came home in a prodigious thunder-storm, soaking wet, but happy, while Charley roared out a college song at the top of his lungs, and the others joined in the chorus:

> I don't care a fig what the people may think,
> But what *will* the Governor say!

And as young Charley's "Governor" was sitting alongside, joining in the chorus, what did it matter after all?

He tells of another occasion when he was the leading spirit of fun at a children's birthday party. The "birthday girl" was one of his special friends, Miss Nina Macready, and the sleight-of-hand tricks he and Forster performed on that memorable night, sound wonderful even to-day. They produced a plum pudding from an empty saucepan which they held over a fire made in Stanfield's hat, without even hurting the lining; they changed a box of bran into a guinea pig, and many other remarkable things known to the trade.

On another occasion it was Dickens who, in his kind, fatherly way, drew out all the timid children at a party, made them recite their little pieces and sing their little songs; it was he who led the games and joined in the fun. He was the friend, therefore, of every child he met, and children know by instinct how to choose their friends.

But where his friends were to be found in even greater numbers was among the poor, whose haunts he knew so well, whose pathetic history he has told us so beautifully, whose cause he served throughout his life, so nobly.

No matter what honors or what good fortune came his way, his pen was always ready for the people, that great mass of people struggling in the darkness; his hand was always stretched forth

to help them toward the light and the vision of better things. His greatest gift to these poor friends of his was "Hard Times," and it rang through England at a time when the laboring class most needed his help. It was more than a sermon — it was a true story of life, and it was the sign and seal of a great friendship.

Nothing was ever too much to ask or to give in the name of friendship. Dickens's friends could have shared his very coat with him — had they needed it; indeed, they shared many things that the world knew nothing about.

He had beautiful, old-fashioned ideas about friendship; he had old-fashioned ideas about many things — but he could draw real men and women, real boys and girls, and Time has not washed the colors from his pictures.

CHAPTER XV.

DICKENS AT HOME.

BY home, we mean Gad's Hill, the dream of his boyhood, the reality of his middle age, the place of all places where he most desired to be, and where he was most contented to stay; and from the pen of his own daughter, Mamie, we have an ideal picture of what he was in the home life about him.

"His care and thoughtfulness about home matters," she tells us, . . . "were really marvelous when we remember his active, eager, restless, working brain. . . . He was full of the kind of interest in a house which is commonly confined to women, and his care of and for us as wee children did most certainly pass the love of women. His was a tender and most affectionate nature."

Speaking of his love for children, she says:

"We can see, by the different child characters in his books, what a wonderful knowledge he had of children, and what a wonderful and truly womanly sympathy he had with them in all their childish joys and griefs. I can remember with us, his own children, how kind, considerate, and patient he always was.

"But we were never afraid to go to him in any trouble, and never had a snub from him or a cross word under any circumstances. He was always glad to give us 'treats,' as he called them, . . . and if any favor had to be asked we were always sure of a favorable answer. On these occasions my sister 'Katie' was generally our messenger, we others waiting outside the study door to hear the verdict.

"There never existed, I think, in all the world, a more thoroughly tidy or methodical creature than was my father. He was tidy in every way — in his mind, in his handsome, graceful person, in his work, in keeping his writing-table drawers, in his large correspondence, in fact, in his whole life."

When the girls were little, in the old days at Devonshire Terrace, they had a garret room, which their father beautified and furnished for them, and whenever they put up a new ornament or hung a new picture, "Father" had to be dragged to the top of the house to see the latest addition. No lady of the house could have been more particular about visiting every room once a day, and "if a chair was out of its place, or a blind not quite straight, or a crumb left on the floor, woe betide the offender."

"His punctuality," his daughter writes, "was almost frightful to an unpunctual mind."

His friends, on being invited to Gad's Hill, were thoroughly posted as to time of arrival and depar-

ture. Dickens was always on time to meet them, but if they were late through fault of their own, they either paid the penalty and walked to the house, or else hired a "fly."

His sympathy with sickness or suffering was very keen, and he was splendid in a sick room. His quick step, his clear, cheery voice, his bright talk, made people forget their aches and pains, and he seemed to know exactly what to do in an emergency.

As the children grew older, especially the girls, he made great companions of them. Mary became his right hand — a quiet, serene presence in the house, but Kate had the power of "drawing him out," and at their own quiet dinner table he often shone most brilliantly.

His eyes — those wonderful eyes — seemed to impress everyone, and never lost their power. They lent the chief expression to his face, now soft and dreamy, now full of fun and laughter.

But the years and the incessant work had made changes in his face, it was seamed and wrinkled, and at fifty-eight he was at least ten years older than he should have been. He had put too much into his life and was an elderly man when he should have just turned the corner of middle age. That is why Gad's Hill, with its restful beauty, was so delightful to him, and as he drove or walked along the beautiful roads and by-ways, he could pick up here and there the threads of his stories, for most

of them held a touch of the Kentish country as well as of London. From "Pickwick" to "Edwin Drood"— his last unfinished novel — we can pick flowers along this beautiful country wayside. He might write his books in Lausanne, in Genoa, or in Paris, but they breathed of London and this country-side.

He liked the ancestral air about his new home; he hoped to make it the beginning of a family estate; he wanted to be buried near it, in some peaceful, quiet spot away from the world, but he had much to do before he thought of dying. And yet in many little ways he himself saw signs of breaking health; he was often very tired, and after his reading tour in America, this fatigue was very noticeable to others. But he would let nothing mar the lightness and the gaiety of his home life.

Miss Dickens describes the joyous Christmas frolics and Twelfth Night festivities, where the more children that assembled under his roof — the merrier. He wrote once to a friend:

"The Actuary of the national debt couldn't calculate the number of children who are coming here on Twelfth Night, in honor of Charley's birthday, for which occasion I have provided a magic lantern and divers other tremendous engines of that nature. But the best of it is that Forster and I have purchased between us the entire stock-in-trade of a conjuror, the practice and display whereof is entrusted to me. And if you could see me conjuring

the company's watches into impossible tea-caddies, and causing pieces of money to fly, and burning pocket handkerchiefs — without burning 'em, and practicing in my own room without anybody to admire, you would never forget it as long as you live."

Miss Dickens says:

"One of these conjuring tricks comprised the disappearance and reappearance of a tiny doll, which would announce most unexpected pieces of news and messages to the different children in the audience; this doll was a particular favorite, and its arrival eagerly awaited and welcomed."

Later, some tinier folks still were added to his audience, his own grandchildren, the children of Charles, who became his boon companions. He found them great fun, and taught them to call him "Wenerables," as the immortal *Sam Weller* would have done. They considered it the grave and proper name for him, much to the amusement of the family.

Gad's Hill was always so full of guests for the holiday season that a cottage in the village was hired for the bachelor members of the party, and jolly times they had. For Dickens made a delightfully entertaining host, his conversation at his own table was so full of humor and real fun that the servants were often convulsed with laughter as they waited on the guests.

"One morning," we are told, "it was the last

day of the year, I remember, while we were at breakfast at Gad's Hill, my father suggested that we should celebrate the evening by a charade, to be acted in pantomime. The suggestion was received with acclamation, and amid shouts and laughing we were then and there — guests and members of the family — allotted our respective parts. My father went about collecting 'stage properties,' rehearsals were 'called' at least four times during the morning, and in all our excitement no thought was given to the necessary part of a charade — the audience, whose business it is to guess the pantomime. At luncheon, someone asked suddenly, 'But what about the audience?' 'Why, bless my soul,' said my father, 'I'd forgotten all about that.'"

The invitations were sent out at once and the evening turned out to be a memorable one. Then towards midnight, in the midst of the frolic, actors and audience streamed out into the hall "and, throwing wide open the door, my father, watch in hand, stood waiting to hear the bells ring in the New Year. All was hush and silence after the laughter and merriment! Suddenly the peal of bells sounded, and, turning, he said, 'A happy New Year to us all! God bless us!' Kisses, good wishes, and shaking of hands brought us back to the fun and gaiety of a few minutes earlier."

One New Year's day he organized field sports for the villagers, and nothing was spared to make this winter fête a success. Between two and three

thousand people, from all parts of the country, came to witness these sports, chiefly the poor laborers, soldiers, sailors, and navvies, but so great was Dickens's influence over them that he himself wrote to a friend, with satisfaction:

"There was not a dispute, and there was no drunkenness whatever. I made them a little speech from the lawn, at the end of the games, saying that, please God, we would do it again next year. They cheered most lustily and dispersed. The road between this and Chatham was like a fair all day; and surely it is a fine thing to get such perfect behavior out of a reckless seaport town."

When at work Dickens required absolute quiet, and yet he liked to be near to the noise and bustle of London, so that he could get to it when the utter stillness was too much for him. He says: "For a week or fortnight I can write prodigiously in a retired place, a day in London setting and starting me up again. But the toil and labor of writing day after day without that magic lantern is immense."

When they lived at Tavistock House, Miss Dickens relates, she had a serious illness, and during her tedious convalescence her father suggested that she should be carried down every day into his study. The quiet child was afraid of disturbing him, but he was eager to have her.

"On one of these mornings," she writes, "I was lying on the sofa endeavoring to keep perfectly

quiet while my father wrote busily and rapidly at his desk, when he suddenly jumped from his chair and rushed to the mirror which hung near, and in which I could see the reflection of some extraordinary facial contortions which he was making. He returned rapidly to his desk, wrote furiously for a few moments, and then went again to the mirror. The facial pantomime was resumed, and then, turning toward, but evidently not seeing me, he began talking rapidly in a low voice. Ceasing this soon, however, he returned once more to his desk, where he remained silently writing until luncheon time. Then I knew that . . . he had thrown himself completely into the character that he was creating, and that for the time being, he had not only lost sight of his surroundings, but had actually become . . . the creature of his pen."

His study was always the pleasantest of pleasing places. The one at Gad's Hill was lined with books, and to preserve the library effect, counterfeit book-backs were arranged on shelves to fit the door of the room. These book-backs all had titles chosen by Dickens himself, whose sense of humor could not be suppressed. Here are some of them:

Commonplace Book of the Oldest Inhabitant. 2 vols.
Growler's Gruffiology, with Appendix. 4 vols.
The Books of Moses and Sons.
Lady Godiva on the Horse.
Miss Buffin on Deportment.

Hansard Guide to Refreshing Sleep. (Many vols.)
Opties. (Hooks and Eyes.)
Acoustics. (Cod's Sounds.)
Noah's Arkitecture. 2 vols.
Chickweed.
Groundsel. (By the Author of Chickweed.)
Cats' Lives. 9 vols.
Five Minutes in China. 3 vols.
History of the Middling Ages. 6 vols.
Jonah's Account of the Whale.
Kant's Eminent Humbugs. 10 vols.
Bowwowdom.
The Quarrelly Review. 4 vols.
Steele, by the Author of "Ion."
On the Use of Mercury by the Ancient Poets.
Drowsy's Recollections of Nothing.
The Art of Cutting Teeth.
Teazer's Commentaries.

There were many other names on the shelves, but these are enough for illustration.

When Dickens first moved to Gad's Hill on a certain memorable third of September, 1860, he started a remarkable bonfire on the place. He wrote to Mr. W. H. Wills:

"Yesterday I burnt in the field at Gad's Hill the accumulated letters and papers of twenty years. They sent up a smoke like the Genie when he got out of the casket on the seashore, and as it was an exquisite day when I began, and rained very heavily when I finished, I suspect my correspondence of having overcast the face of the heavens."

A man is, of course, at liberty to do what he

likes with his own letters, but such reckless burning seems a pity. His own private and particular letters, especially those of his family, he naturally wished to destroy, but he was so much in the eye of the public that he might have spared to them those letters which were of national or international interest.

In the same manner, when John Forster prepared his friend's biography and made use of his own private letters and communications from Dickens, he had no hesitancy in snipping and cutting to suit his text, and then pasting them on his manuscript regardless of the closely-written back. To him those letters meant merely the letters of a friend; the literary world would have paid many guineas for the fragments. As it is, however, Dickens's letters to *his* friends received better treatment, and there are, besides the three volumes of his collected letters, many others which rise up from unexpected sources.

His love for animals, flowers, and birds, was almost a passion. Dogs were his favorites, and he was fond of telling an anecdote of a certain dog friend of his, the property of a lady whom he knew quite well. His name was "Of," and he was a great good-humored, black Newfoundland dog. He used to go out every morning for a swim in the river, but his owner noticed that he always came back smelling of beer. She watched, and discovered that "Of" stopped each morning at a

certain beer shop and was supplied with his regular pint, by the man in charge, who explained to the lady in this fashion:

"Yes, ma'am, I know he's your dog, ma'am, but I didn't when he first came. He looked in, ma'am, as a brickmaker might, and then he come in, as a brickmaker might, and he wagged his tail at the pots, and he giv a sniff round, and conveyed to me as he was used to beer. So I draw'd him a drop, and he drunk it up. Next morning he come agen by the clock, and I draw'd him a pint, and ever since he has took his pint reg'lar."

"On account of our birds," writes Miss Dickens, "cats were not allowed in the house; but from a friend in London I received a present of a white kitten — Williamina — and she and her numerous offspring had a happy home at Gad's Hill. She became a favorite with all the household and showed particular devotion to my father. I remember on one occasion when she had presented us with a family of kittens, she selected a corner of father's study for their home. She brought them one by one from the kitchen and deposited them in her chosen corner. My father called to me to remove them, saying that he could not allow the kittens to remain in his room. I did so, but Williamina brought them back again, one by one. Again they were removed. The third time, instead of putting them in a corner, she placed them all, and herself, beside them, at my father's feet, and gave him such

an imploring glance that he could resist no longer, and they were allowed to remain."

One of these kittens was quite deaf, and he had no name. He became attached to Dickens and followed him about the garden like a dog. One night when he was reading by the light of a candle, with the cat beside him, suddenly the light went out; he was interested in his book, so he relighted the candle and went on reading; a few minutes later he caught the cat in the act of putting out the candle again with his paw, which meant, "No more reading to-night, Mr. Dickens," so the hint was taken, and puss was given the petting he demanded.

Dogs, however, were the favorite animals of the household. There were "Turk," a beautiful mastiff, and "Linda," a St. Bernard; there were "Don and Bumble," big Newfoundlands; there was "Sultan," an Irish bloodhound; "and last, though not least — except in size — was 'Mrs. Bouncer,' a tiny Pomeranian, who won her way by her grace and daintiness into the affections of every member of the household. My father became her special slave, and had a peculiar voice for her — as he had for us when we were children — to which she would respond at once, by running to him from any part of the house when she heard his call. He delighted to see her with the large dogs, with whom she gave herself great airs, 'because,' as he said, 'she looks so preposterously small.'"

"Mrs. Bouncer" was quite a character in the

family, and Dickens used to send messages to her when he was away from home. Mr. Percy Fitzgerald has written a great deal concerning the personal life of Charles Dickens, in which he remarks on his love for dogs and the parts they played in his many novels. In a certain interesting article by him, entitled "The Landseer of English Fiction," he has dwelt on this side of his character. Landseer, we know, was a wonderful painter of dogs, and Dickens had that same touch in his descriptions.

On his return from his last visit to America, Dickens wrote the following account of his welcome home by the dogs: "As you ask me about the dogs, I begin with them. When I came down first, I came to Gravesend — five miles off. The two Newfoundland dogs, coming to meet me with the usual carriage and the usual driver, and beholding me coming in my usual dress, out at the usual door, it struck me that their recollection of my having been absent for any unusual time, was at once cancelled. They behaved (they were both young dogs) exactly in their usual manner, coming behind the basket phaëton as we trotted along, and lifting their heads to have their ears pulled, a special attention which they received from no one else. But when I drove into the stable yard, 'Linda' was greatly excited; weeping profusely, and throwing herself on her back that she might caress my foot with her great forepaws. Mamie's little dog, too, 'Mrs.

Bouncer,' barked in the greatest agitation on being called down and asked, 'Who is this?'"

There was a celebrated pet canary named Dick, the property of Miss Dickens, who died of old age and had a grave at Gad's Hill, and there was a certain fat, family horse named "Trotty Veck," who was also a great pet.

In speaking of her father's readings, Miss Dickens says: " . . . into their performances and preparations he threw the best energy of his heart and soul, practicing and rehearsing at all times and places. The meadow near our home was a favorite place, and people passing through the lane, not knowing who he was or what doing, must have thought him a madman, from his reciting and gesticulation."

Dickens gave his last public reading in St. James's Hall, London, on March 15, 1870, proposing from that time forth, to devote himself entirely to his writing. Returning to Gad's Hill, he at once plunged into his new book, "The Mystery of Edwin Drood," the first part of which made its appearance in April, 1870.

He was as keenly interested in this story as if it had been his first instead of his last, and to insure perfect quiet during his writing hours, he retired to the pretty little Swiss Chalet, which his friend, Mr. Charles Fechter (the well-known actor) had sent him as a present one Christmas, and which had been placed amid shrubbery and trees, in the most

attractive part of the grounds. We have often seen these Chalets in toy miniature. This one could be entered below, through a door in front, and a winding stairway on the outside led to the upper story.

"My room is up among the branches of the trees," wrote Dickens to an American friend, "and the birds and the butterflies fly in and out, and the green branches shoot in at the open windows, and the lights and shadows of the clouds come and go with the rest of the company."

And there in this quiet and repose was begun (and alas! left unfinished) his last book. As he wrote day after day, with all the old vigor and the old delight, he had no idea that the end would come for him with the first breath of the summer breeze. He only knew that life was very full still of all that a man holds dear, and he wanted to live to do more work, and add more luster to his name, and leave a brighter heritage to his children.

The story itself — at least, all we have of it — is darkened with gloom and foreboding, so perhaps after all he was touched with a presentiment of his coming fate; but the sunny life went on at Gad's Hill, and none knew of the silent battle with mortal weakness, during the writing of "Edwin Drood." He never complained, though his face often bore signs of the struggle.

He was always improving Gad's Hill; the walls and doors of the drawing-room had been lined with

mirrors, and when Dickens showed it to Mrs. Collins, his youngest daughter, he said:

"Now, Katie, you behold your parent's latest and last achievement," and she had replied laughingly, "I believe, Papa, that when you become an angel, your wings will be made of looking-glass, and your crown of scarlet geraniums." Miss Dickens, in her reminiscences, adds:

"The 'last improvement'— in truth, the very last, was the building of a conservatory between the drawing and dining rooms. My father was more delighted with this than with any previous alteration, and it was certainly a pretty addition to the quaint old villa.

" . . . He was out with the dogs for the last time on the sixth of June, when he walked into Rochester for the *Daily Mail*. My sister — who had come to see the latest 'improvement' . . . was to take me with her to London on her return, for a short visit. The conservatory or 'improvement' which Katie had been summoned to inspect, had been stocked, and by this time many of the plants were in full blossom. Everything was at its brightest, and I remember distinctly my father's pleasure in showing my sister the beauties of his 'improvement.'"

The next day, Monday, June the seventh, the two young ladies left for London. Dickens always hated to say good-by, and at the time of their going, he was in the Chalet, writing busily. "Just as we

were about to start," Miss Dickens tells us, "my sister suddenly said: 'I *must* say good-bye to Papa,' and hurried over to the Chalet . . . as a rule my father would hold up his cheek to be kissed, but this day he took my sister in his arms, saying, 'God bless you, Katie,' and there 'among the branches of the trees, among the birds and butterflies, and the scent of flowers,' she left him, never to look into his eyes again."

On June eighth, two hours before he was taken ill, he had written about Rochester and the Cathedral, about the "Resurrection and the Life," when he laid down his pen forever.

That night at the dinner-table he was stricken down. His sister-in-law, who was with him, terrified at his pallor, begged him to lie down. "Yes, on the ground," he said — the very last words he spoke. Then unconsciousness fell upon him, and the end came swiftly. On the ninth of June, without a struggle, and just one sigh, he closed his beautiful eyes, and the great human heart was still at last.

His wish had been for a quiet grave in some well-loved corner of Gad's Hill, but the nation claimed its dead, and who better deserved a place in Westminster Abbey — than Charles Dickens?

There are many memorials of him, and from many pictures his kindly, genial face smiles out at us, but the saddest picture of all is called "The Empty Chair." Only a large sunny room, with a

bay window looking out upon the smiling English country. The desk is there, and on its shelf the little ornaments he loved to have about him. A writing-pad rests on the sloping ledge, but the chair tells the eloquent tale; it is pushed back just as if the Author had risen for one of his quick turns about the room; there is a listening air about it, its arms seem stretched out for an embrace, the very room has a waiting aspect for the presence that will never come.

And it seems as if the world were still waiting for another Dickens. There has been no one yet to fill the empty chair.

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THE END.

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